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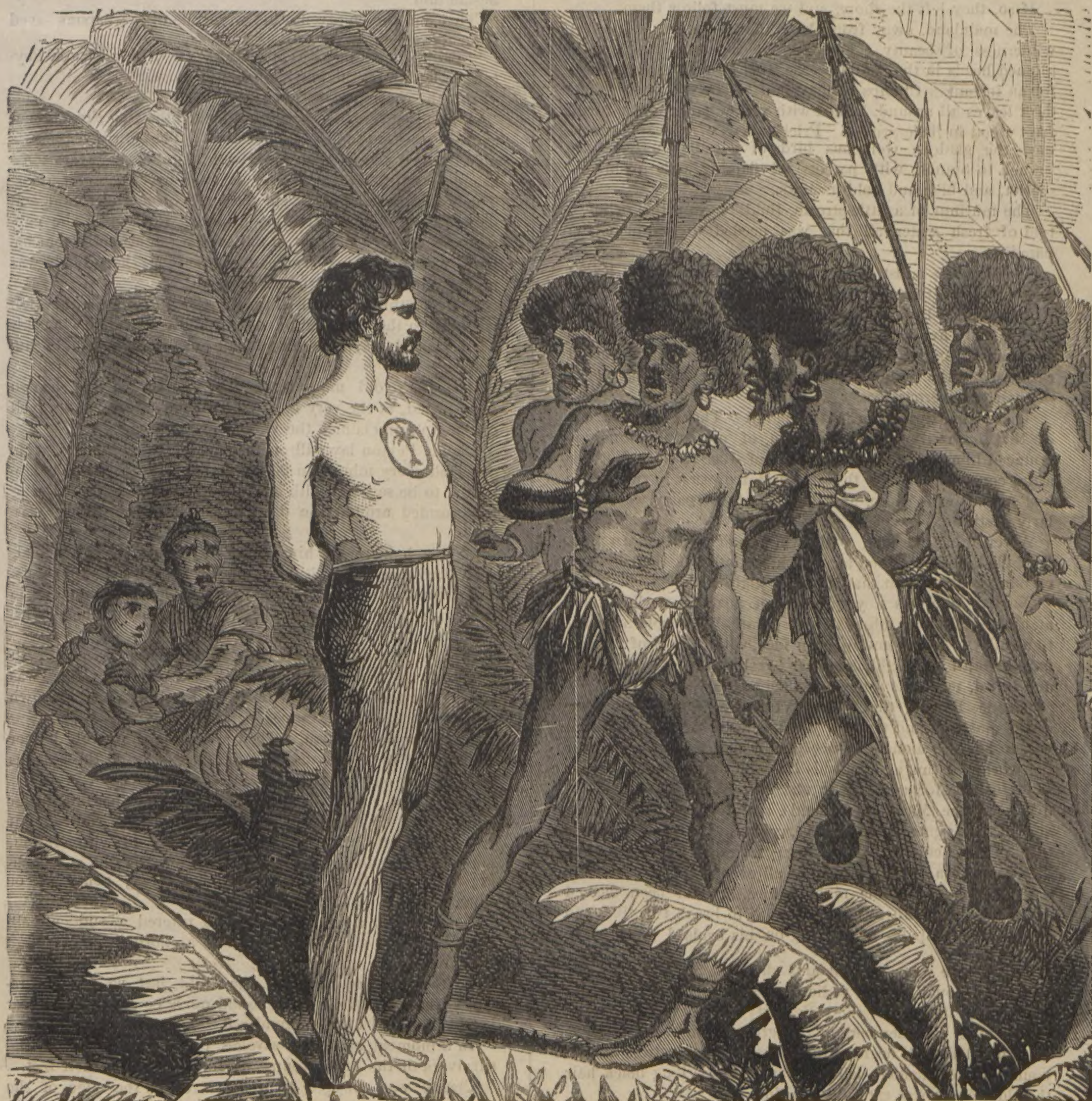
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THE RED RAJAH; or, THE SCOURGE OF THE INDIES.

BY CAPTAIN FREDERICK WHITTAKER.



THE RED RAJAH

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN EATERS.

THE hot sun shone out in the midst of a cloudless sky. The rocks glowed and scorched in the fierce heat, as they cropped up here and there from the white sand on the beach.

The sea outside was as smooth as a mirror. Only the ever-restless, heaving "ground swell" passed silently and mysteriously along at intervals, and dashed into glittering foam on the sunken coral reef that encircled the island.

The sharks stole silently about just outside the breakers. You could see the sharp back fins darting to and fro among some floating fragments.

Seeing the tranquil appearance of everything around that lovely island, you would never have thought of storm and tempest. And yet, only the day before, a frightful typhoon had swept over it with devouring rage. Those fragments only yesterday were part and parcel of a noble frigate. She was dashed to atoms upon the hidden edge of that terrible reef, only marked now by that white ripple.

But where are her crew?

Ask those ghastly monsters, skimming silently to and fro, cutting the golden sunshine as it kisses the water.

But, surely, some escaped out of four hundred brave sailors, instinct with life and strength?

If so, they left the shore, and we must follow them.

The mainland, away from the white beach, was a perfect wilderness of beauty. Feathery cocoa-palms waved their plumed heads in the gentle breeze, that now and then stirred for an instant. Clumps of luxuriant bananas displayed their dark leaves all around, loaded with yellow pods. The bread fruit stood in little groves. Prickly beds of pineapples covered the glades. Gorgeous birds of paradise flitted from branch to branch, with parrots all flaming with green and scarlet, and blue and gold macaws.

The murmur of a little stream, tinkling over the pebbles, told of fresh water, all that was needed to complete the paradise.

There, in the midst of a grassy glade, spangled with bright flowers, was gathered a group of white people.

It was the little remnant of the crew of the ill-fated frigate, only five in number, all told. They were seated on the ground, in earnest conversation, consulting on means of escape from the island, and never dreaming of the presence of their treacherous foes.

There were three men in the party. The gold-laced cap of that bronzed, middle-aged man, of powerful frame, announced him as one of the officers of the vessel. But his attire consisted only of the shirt and trousers in which he had swum to the shore, and the rest of the party were similarly destitute.

A venerable old man with white hair sat next to him. Half clad, and wretched as was his condition, there was a certain air about him that spoke of high life.

Next to him was a young man of near thirty, handsome and well-built, who might have been anything, from an artist to a sailor. Frank and open in face, with a brow of uncommon breadth and height, his clear hazel eyes, and brown hair and beard, made his a pleasant face to look at.

Claude Peyton, the young Virginian, was an amateur artist, musician and poet; a yachtsman of that daring kind which America alone produces; who had traveled all over the world for fun, and sold his little Baltimore-built schooner at Melbourne for twice what she cost him. How he had drifted to the Marquesas Islands, and how he came to be aboard the frigate *Philomele* (carrying out a new Governor to the French colony of Pondicherry in India), time will show.

He was in a hard case now, at all events. Cast ashore by a tremendous wave the night before, he had been dashed against a rock, with so much force as to break two ribs, and render him incapable of walking on his bruised limbs without help.

But his eye was as bright and cheerful, his laugh as gay as ever, although he had to lie on his back on the grass; and Peyton was the soul of the little party still.

The other two members of the group were women. One was an old French negress, the nurse and protectress of that young girl, of slender, delicate frame, whose long black hair the old woman was carefully plaiting.

The girl was quite a child, not more than fourteen at the utmost. Her face was very pale, the features small, and delicate in outline, and lighted up by the most magnificent eyes ever seen. They were like two dark lakes at midnight, in whose clear depths the stars lie sleeping.

The old gentleman was the Marquis de Favannes, late Governor of the Marquesas group, under French rule, who had been promoted to the Governorship of Pondicherry. On his passage thither he had been wrecked, as we see. The child was his only daughter, Marguerite, who went with him under old Marie's guardianship.

"Ah! captain!" the old marquis was saying, "if it were only the question of living here, we need have no fear. There are fish, flesh and fowl enough for the catching. But how shall we get away?"

Captain Bonhonnue shook his head, gloomily.

"God knows," he said. "If we get a chance—"

He had no time to utter more.

An awful cry, a yell, as if hell were let loose, suddenly broke from the thickets all round them. Captain Bonhonnue leaped to his feet, with a shout of terror, catching up a musket that lay beside him.

Alas! the weapon was empty.

A throng of bronzed figures, brandishing spears and clubs, came leaping on the glade from every side; their white pointed teeth glistening from their dark faces, and uttering appalling yells.

The women shrunk and cowered down into the earth before the terrible onslaught, but the old marquis sprung up, as active as a boy, and flashed out a ship's cutlass that lay beside him.

That and the empty musket were the only weapons saved from the wreck.

"Drop your arms! Don't resist!" cried poor Claude Peyton, as he lay on the grass, unable to move.

But the caution came too late.

A hundred ferocious savages attacked the two Frenchmen, as they rose to defend themselves. The burly captain, a man framed like a Hercules, kept them at bay for some minutes, fighting like a tiger against overwhelming odds. The heavy musket-butt swept the air in circles all round, and dashed man after man to the ground. But, while the captain was engaged in front, a tall savage ran at him from behind, with a lance of ironwood, whose long, sharp blade was notched and barbed with sharks' teeth.

Pierced through and through, the unhappy sailor fell writhing to the earth, and a dozen clubs descended on his head where he lay, smashing it out of all semblance of humanity.

The poor old marquis, fighting gallantly, was beaten down, dead, at the very beginning of the affray; and a yell of triumph proclaimed the victory of the savages.

Claude Peyton lay still on the grass by the females. He expected every minute to be murdered. But the savages appeared to be satisfied with slaughter for the present. A ring was formed around the dead bodies and the living prisoners.

Claude half raised himself on his elbow, and watched, with bewildered curiosity, the motions of the naked demons. They commenced a sort of slow dance at once, moving in time with measured steps. Their fierce eyes were bent, with a wolfish glare, on the dead bodies.

Peyton looked round for little Marguerite. He saw with thankfulness that the poor child had fainted. She was spared, for the present, the horrible sight that met his own view and that of old Marie.

The poor old woman, palsied with terror, crouched over the form of the prostrate child, gazing stonily on the hideous orgies going on around them.

Now the chant changed its character. It became faster and wilder. A single savage, evidently a chief, moved out from the circle, and commenced a song of vituperation, apostrophizing the dead bodies. He seemed to be reproaching them for their resistance, and heaping contempt on them.

At last, after a long harangue, he uttered a sudden yell, at which signal all present united in a chorus of howls, and the circle broke up.

At the sound of that yell, the child, just waking up, relapsed into insensibility. The old nurse cowered down over her charge, and Claude shuddered.

In a moment more the savages pounced down upon the survivors of the little group, and forced them to their feet.

Claude was dragged to a palm-tree, by the edge of the

glade, and secured to it in a twinkling, with bark ropes. The old woman and the girl were bound hand and foot, and thrown down close to him.

Four villainous-looking fellows were left to guard them, and the rest of the savages dispersed. The dead bodies of the two white men, and three savages slain by the captain, lay in the middle of the little glade, by the banks of the brook.

"What are they going to do?" thought Claude, as he stood fastened to the tree.

He had not long to wait before he understood.

The whole band soon came trooping back, each man with a large fagot of dry sticks, which they cast on the ground in a heap.

Then the horrible truth burst on him in a flash.

The savages were cannibals!

There was no mistaking their intentions. In a very few minutes a large fire was crackling and blazing in the middle of the glade. The hoarse, bellowing sounds of conch shells, blown by numbers of people in the vicinity, announced the approach of more savages to join the feast. Soon they came in, from all quarters, men, women and little, toddling children, all dancing, and yelling, and clapping their hands for glee.

Just as neatly as professed butchers, the cannibals proceeded to cut up the bodies, not only of the white men, but also of their own slain comrades. The whole crowd hung around the fires, increasing every moment. It became evident that there would not be enough to satisfy them all.

Like hungry wolves, they seized the pieces of flesh, singed them hastily in the flames, and tore them to pieces with ferocious avidity. Inside of twenty minutes not a vestige remained of the bodies, and still the demoniac wretches appeared to be unsatisfied.

A sickening sensation of loathing and repugnance overcame poor Peyton, as he looked on, and felt that his turn would come the next.

The man-eaters began to cast glances toward him and his companions, and then, for the first time, the young man noticed that little Marguerite had regained her consciousness.

The poor child lay there, the cruel bonds cutting into her delicate flesh, her great eyes dilated with mute terror, and fixed upon the grim forms, dancing with devilish glee.

"Oh! my God!" groaned poor Claude, utterly overcome, "must that pure, delicate little being suffer such a horrid fate?"

The girl heard his ejaculation, and understood it, though he spoke English. Marguerite de Favannes was a great admirer of the handsome young stranger, who was so kind to her all the voyage. Child-like, she thought he could do anything.

"Oh! Monsieur Claude," she murmured, "where are we? Where is papa? What are those fearful men doing? Don't let them hurt Marguerite."

Claude broke down with a great sob.

"God help us all!" he said. "I am as helpless as you, little one. I fear we are doomed."

Even as he spoke, a great clamor arose among the savages, who seemed to be disputing some point with much anger. From the frequent pointing toward the prisoners, Peyton concluded that they were agitating the question of their death. He did not dare to tell Marguerite. The poor child was blessed in her unconsciousness.

There is something so repulsive to the nature of man in the idea of cannibalism, that the poor fellow's soul seemed to sink within him, when, at last, a deputation of hideous, tattooed demons approached, and began to examine the prisoners, as if to select the fattest.

They passed contemptuously over the old negress. One of them uttered some jest, about her leanness and toughness, probably, for the rest laughed boisterously.

They did not seem to pay much attention to the child, either, and Peyton felt relieved about her immediate fate. But they stopped opposite to himself, and examined him with great apparent satisfaction.

The head chief felt his arms and ribs, and nodded approvingly, while he expatiated on his good condition.

His cronies assented gladly, and the chief cut the prisoner's bonds and signed to him to step out. Alone, badly injured, and totally defenseless, Peyton had no choice but to obey. He hobbled forward, with difficulty, and the chief laid his hand on his arm, and signed to him to strip off his shirt.

The young man hesitated. He felt that he was to be slaughtered, and yet he hardly liked to assist his butchers.

The chief stamped his foot angrily, and signed to him to pull it off. Peyton stood mute and still.

Muttering some furious words, the savage laid his strong right hand on the other's collar and tore the shirt open with a single wrench. As he did so, and the white bust of the young man became exposed to view, the chief suddenly started back, with a loud exclamation of wonder, at something which he saw. He fixed his eyes on the broad breast of the prisoner, and, calling to the rest, pointed out to them a strange figure traced thereon, in blue lines.

Peyton stared stupidly at the savages. He could not comprehend what was the matter. What was his surprise, when the chief prostrated himself at his feet, and the whole assembly of savages followed the example!

A moment before they would have devoured him as their prey. Now they were worshipping him as a god!

And what had caused this sudden change?

An idle device, tattooed by a schoolboy brother, more than twenty years before, by the banks of the rushing Rappahannock. A rude sketch of a palm-tree, with a snake coiled around it, tail in mouth. The ancient emblems of life and eternity they were. How well Claude remembered that day, when his wild brother Clarence, full of some book of Egyptian mysteries he had been reading, would hear of nothing but tattooing the strange device on his breast. Poor Clarence! Wild and willful ever—was he yet alive? He had not seen that brother for twenty long years now, when he left home in anger.

And now, Clarence's queer freak was the means of saving his brother's life. This device seemed to have touched some mysterious cord in the breasts of the islanders.

He heard them discussing the matter in their strange Polynesian language, of which the only word he understood was the phrase frequently repeated of "*Taboo—taboo.*"

He knew that that meant "sacred," and comprehended that something had made him so in their eyes.

The chief called out to some one in the rear, and a little, dark-skinned girl came forward with a long mantle of *tappa*, or native Polynesian cloth, which she offered to the astounded Peyton in lieu of his torn garments.

Observing that the young man could not walk from pain, the stalwart Polynesian knelt down at his feet, and made signs that he should ride upon his shoulders.

But Claude, overwhelmed with sudden honors as he was, had not forgotten his friends. He was resolved to save the orphaned child from the horrible fate that awaited her, if the thing was possible. He hobbled forward to her side, and stretched out his hands over her, crying, as he did so:

"Taboo—taboo."

He had heard that a thing might be tabooed so.

But an universal cry of dissent showed him on how slender a thread his own safety still hung.

The savages refused to taboo the girl.

What was to be done? He could not leave the little one to be devoured. While he hesitated, the stalwart islander made signs to him again to mount on his shoulders. The faces of the crowd around again grew dark and menacing. Claude took his resolution.

He took the child, and lifted her in his arms, hugging her close to him, so that his body sheltered her from them all.

"Kill us both, then," he said, doggedly, in English, as if they could understand him; "one taboo, taboo both."

Something in his attitude and defiant look seemed to make them hesitate.

It was only for a moment, however. The next, strong hands tore the shrieking child from his grasp. He was lifted by main force on the shoulders of the huge savage, who ran off with him as if he were a child.

He saw the little girl dragged into the center of the glade, and the uplifted clubs ready to take her life; and then occurred an interruption so sudden and unexpected that he hardly believed his eyes.

A line of men, all glittering in gold and scarlet, came leaping and bounding through the trees, with a shrill yell, driving the naked savages before them like sheep.

The gleaming of steel weapons, and the cracking of firearms, told that the new-comers were of a different race from the dark Polynesians.

The latter did not seem even to think of resistance, for they dropped spears and clubs, left their helpless female prisoner behind, still unharmed, and fled into the interior of the island, bearing with them only the tabooed white man, to whose possession they appeared to attach a mysterious importance.

CHAPTER II.

THE RED RAJAH.

LITTLE MARGUERITE was hardly conscious of what was passing around her, so terror-stricken was she. She saw, one moment, hideous naked forms, tattooed with blue marks, with diabolical faces, surrounding her with uplifted clubs. The next moment she was left alone. The savages were running like frightened deer. Then there came a rush of more men round her; and the poor child fell on her knees, imagining that they would kill her. She closed her eyes, expecting every moment to feel the blow. But none came.

She opened them to gaze timidly around, and they met those of a very tall and singularly handsome man, who stood close to her, regarding her with a fixed gaze.

The stranger, like all of the men around, was clad entirely in scarlet and gold, and his costume was extraordinarily rich. He was armed like all the rest, and wore his hair long and flowing.

But poor Marguerite noted nothing in particular as yet. All she was conscious of was that wild men, with dark, fierce faces and long, streaming black hair, were all around her, talking in some strange language that she could not understand; and their chief stood with his strange eyes fixed on hers in a manner that made her tremble. She was like the bird under the gaze of the serpent, powerless to move. Her own dark eyes, unconsciously pleading and piteous, were riveted on those of the chief, as she knelt there with clasped hands.

What was her amazement, then, to be addressed by this wonderful-looking chief in her own language, spoken with perfect purity.

"What is your name, child?" asked he, in a voice of singular depth and sweetness.

Marguerite hardly understood him yet, she was so bewildered with terror. He smiled kindly, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Fear not, little one," he said; "you are among friends now. What is your name?"

Marguerite looked up in the stranger's face. It was one of those dark, handsome, wicked faces, that a fallen angel might have worn. But now, with the smile that lighted it up, it looked so beautiful and grand that the simple child thought it perfect. All her terror seemed to vanish, under the magic influence of that single glance. Without knowing how it came about, she had told him her name, and all her little history, up to the time of the attack of the savages. More she did not know. She was quite unconscious of her father's horrible fate.

"And who are you, monsieur?" she asked him, at the close of her little tale, to which the other listened attentively.

The stranger drew himself up proudly. A smile lifted his long, drooping mustache, as he answered:

"I am a man of whom half the world hereabouts talks as a prince, the other half as a devil. If you wish the name I go by, here it is, written on my dress, and that of my crew. I am THE RED RAJAH."

Marguerite did not understand him, but she said nothing. She looked around her with more confidence, however, and beheld old Marie close to her, on her knees, gabbling over her prayers as fast as she could, with her eyes closed, evidently expecting immediate death. Her young mistress went to her, and roused her with the assurance that they were safe, while the Red Rajah was speaking to one of his men.

The man salaamed respectfully, and replied in a few words. The Red Rajah turned to the girl.

"Your friends are all dead, I think," he said; "and you had best ask no questions about them. They are dead, and you are left alone. You must come with me."

The girl did not burst out crying, as he expected. The poor child had suffered too terrible a shock to leave her the power for that. She only turned to him pleadingly.

"Oh! monsieur," she said, "I knew it. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"You will come with us," was the reply. "I will take you to my home, where the paradise bird flutters among the palm trees, and the flowers bloom all the year round. There you shall be the queen of a thousand slaves, and the wealth of the Indies shall be poured at your feet. Will you come, Marguerite?"

His great dark eyes became strangely soft and luminous as he spoke, and his voice was like the cooing of a dove. But something in the expression of his face disturbed Mar-

guerite. The innocent child hardly knew whether to be attracted or repelled by this man. She clung closer to old Marie, as she timidly said:

"Thank you very much, monsieur. Thank you—but—but—I would rather go to Pondicherry, if you please. I have an aunt living there, who— Please, monsieur, please let me go to Pondicherry, dear monsieur."

The girl turned her large liquid eyes on his, imploringly. Her long, silky black hair hung down on each side of her poor little pale face; and she might have melted a heart of stone. The Red Rajah looked at her fixedly, out of his glowing eyes, for a moment. Then he patted her shoulder encouragingly.

"Very well, little one," he said; "you shall go there, after a little while. But you must come with me now. Come."

As he spoke, he offered her his arm, with a courtly grace a king might have envied.

Marguerite took it timidly, and walked beside him, while old Marie hobbled behind. The Rajah gave some orders to his men, who ran ahead through the woods in great haste, to cut a path for their leader with their chopping-knives.

The Rajah and his young companion then moved leisurely forward through the woods, till they reached the summit of a long ridge, that ran down to the ocean from the interior of the island. Marguerite uttered an involuntary cry.

"Oh! how beautiful," she exclaimed, as her eyes rested on a small semicircular bay, glittering in the rays of the sun, with a surrounding beach of snow-white sand. Little sparkling wavelets kissed the shore with a low, murmuring noise. The hills sloped gently down all round the bay to the edge of the shore. The graceful, drooping heads of cocoa-palms, the feathery tree-ferns, the lofty durion-tree, and hundreds of trees and vines of different kinds, lent an air of luxuriant richness to the scene. Sea-gulls were wheeling to and fro all over the bay, which the rising land-breeze was just beginning to ruffle.

Close to the shore, and inside the encircling reef, which was cut here by a channel, lay three strange-looking vessels. Marguerite and the Rajah, proceeding to the beach, entered a canoe and were paddled to the largest of the vessels, where the polite Rajah handed her to the stern, and placed her on a softly-cushioned seat over the poop-cabin. From this position she could see the whole interior of the vessel, and a singular craft it was. Being exceedingly narrow and sharp, the war-boats could never have stood up in the seas and storms of those latitudes, without assistance. This was afforded by a second vessel, as it were, attached to one side of the war-boat, by two strong, heavy beams, of an arched form, like the flying buttresses in a Gothic church. This second vessel or outrigger was a long stick of timber, carefully pointed at both ends, so as to offer the least possible resistance to the water, and shaped like the war-boat itself. The outrigger beams were nearly twenty feet long, and the leverage afforded by them enables these sharp vessels to stand up under all sail in very heavy weather, by sending some men out on the outrigger to balance the boat with their weight.

The Rajah stood near the girl on the fighting-deck, superintending the watering of his vessels. The last load had been taken aboard and stowed, and the men were hoisting in the canoe, when a shout from the outside vessel caused the chief to turn sharply to the horizon outside.

"*Busar prahu,* Rajah! Busar prahu!*" shouted a tall man, evidently commander of the furthest vessel from the richness of his attire, pointing seaward.

The Rajah looked fixedly in the direction indicated. Marguerite's eyes followed his, and she beheld on the horizon the well-defined sails of a large ship. The Rajah spoke to a pretty Dyak lad who stood by, and the boy dived into the cabin behind. He reappeared with a beautiful double-glass of the best London make which he handed to the Red Rajah. The chief took it, and inspected the stranger long and keenly. When he lowered the glass, there was an ugly look on his face, such as Marguerite had not seen yet. He had looked like a fallen angel before. The devil traits began to darken the haughty beauty of his face now.

He closed the glass and gave it back to the boy. Then, raising the whistle to his lips, he blew three short, quick puffs into it, that proved the signal of activity.

The instant they were heard, the crew rushed to their work like a hive of bees. The long cables, made of the ever-useful ratan, which supplies the place of cordage in the Malay Archipelago, were hauled in, and the anchors brought on

* "A large ship! A large ship!"

board. The latter were made of ironwood, the crooked fork of a tree being chosen. Indeed, every thing on board the native war-boats is made of wood, lashed with ratan. Not a single nail is used anywhere.

Marguerite beheld with astonishment the process of making sail. Instead of masts, there were two triangles, formed of stout, heavy spars, lashed together at the top, the ends resting between heavy blocks of wood under the bulwarks. These triangles could be raised or lowered at will, and were soon hauled up, and set on end, raking forward. There were two of them on each vessel, which were erected in about a minute.

Each of them supported a yard of immense length, made of bamboos spliced together, on which a triangular sail of cocoa-nut mat was spread. The butt of each yard was hauled down to the deck, the lofty peak of the lateen sails mounted in the air, and the next minute the Rajah's war-boat skimmed out of the little bay, through the opening in the coral reef, and stood out into the open sea. The others followed immediately after; and, as the sun was now fast declining, the breeze freshened.

The war-boats drew swiftly out from the lee of the land, and, as they did so, hoisted their jibs, and shaped a course toward the strange ship.

The speed with which the pirate cruisers cut the water was amazing. The swiftest yacht would have had no chance with them, on account of their peculiar model. Like a racing shell, they offered hardly any resistance to the water, and yet the steadying properties of the outrigger rendered them "as stiff as a church."

The Red Rajah walked the deck of his vessel, his eye glancing from the stranger back to his own deck. He had forgotten all about the presence of the child he was carrying off, and was only intent on his prey.

The strange vessel was beating up, laboriously, toward the island. From the general clumsiness of her appearance, as they saw her more plainly, she seemed to be a Dutch vessel. The bluff bows and steep sides, the short masts and squat-looking sails were sure indications of the phlegmatic Hollander.

The Rajah saw that the Dutchman was in his power. He had the weather-gauge in the first place, and could sail three or four feet to the other's one.

He had not been half an hour on the seas when the stranger's decks became plainly visible. And yet the Dutchman, although he saw the war-boats, seemed to have no alarm about them, but held on his course steadily, till the pirates were within half a mile of her, when the ship suddenly wore round and showed them her stern, going off before the wind.

A simultaneous yell from all the pirates announced their appreciation of the tardy compliment to their prowess, when the Dutch vessel spread her sternsails below and aloft; and made the best of her way to the south-east.

But all the sail she could crack on could not make her a match for the swift war-boats of the pirates, who came up, hand over hand, on either quarter.

The Rajah's war-boat was within a cable's length in less than a quarter of an hour, when the chief sounded his war-whistle again. At the signal, over two hundred active forms leaped upon the fighting-deck from below, and a tremendous yell rent the air. At the same moment, the three long swivel guns, with which the pirate was armed, went off on the deck below, and a shower of grape-shot and pieces of iron flew all over the Dutchman.

But there occurred a transformation in the latter so sudden and amazing as to awe even the dare-devil pirates for a moment.

A screen of canvas, ingeniously painted to represent the clumsy outline of a merchant ship, was dropped from all along the sides of the strange vessel, and the black hull and grinning ports of a man-of-war became visible to the astonished Malays.

"I thought so," muttered the Red Rajah, fiercely, to himself. "But you let us get too close, Mynheer, before you showed your teeth."

And he spoke the truth.

Even while he was talking, the corvette (for such she was) put her helm a-starboard, and came sweeping broadside to the Malay war-boats. But the latter were so close to them that the salvo of artillery which roared out now was well-nigh ineffectual. Nine out of ten of the shots went overhead, and made havoc with yards and sails.

Now the Red Rajah showed in his true colors, and

deserved the name he bore. At a puff of his war-whistle, his own masts and yards were sent down on deck in an instant, and the war-boats ranged up alongside of the corvette. A dozen huge hooks flew through the air, and caught in the chains of the stranger, grappling war-boats and ship in one deadly embrace.

The Red Rajah himself was the first to spring up the corvette's side, kriss in hand. His dark eyes were blazing; his long hair streamed behind him, far below his shoulders; the cloth of gold and scarlet of his rich dress glistened in the sun, and he wore in his belt a pair of revolvers, perhaps the first ever seen on a Malay prahu.

With a yell of ferocity, the whole crew of the Rajah's vessel came swarming in at the open ports and over the bulwarks of the corvette, only to be received by a discharge of fire-arms, so close and deadly that the pirates recoiled before it for a moment.

The next, headed by the tall form of the Red Rajah, they closed in a desperate hand-to-hand fight, kriss against cutlass.

CHAPTER III.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

THE strife on the deck of the man-of-war, so suddenly boarded by the Red Rajah, was sanguinary and ferocious to the last degree. The Malays, wild with excitement, plunged into a hand-to-hand struggle with loud yells. The sailors of the man-of-war were armed with cutlasses and revolvers, and their fire was tremendous. But the red-clothed pirates, with their long krisses, stained with poison,* were so closely jammed up with the others, that the cutlasses were almost useless, and many of the sailors were driven to their sheath-knives.

Still the incessant fire of the revolvers for the first few moments made such slaughter among the pirates, that they wavered in their assault.

The trumpet-like voice of the Red Rajah, shouting "*Mari! Mari!*" (come on! come on!) restored the combat to more of equality. His men appeared to be electrified at the sound, and pressed forward, following his tall figure.

A revolver in each hand, and his long kriss between his teeth, the Red Rajah dashed into the press, shooting right and left. At every shot a man fell, and the rest bore back before the terror of his glance.

It was plain, from the presence of revolvers on board, that the corvette was no Dutchman. The fact was that the English squadron on the coast had determined to wipe out the famous pirate who had scourged the seas so long, and one of their vessels had disguised herself to follow him. Had the corvette kept them at long bows, she could have destroyed the war-boats with a few of her heavy broadsides. Fearing their escape by superior swiftness, the captain of the "*Vengeance*" had enticed them close in by his disguise.

With ordinary Malays the device would have been a sure success. They would have turned tail at the first sight of the sloop's battery. But the Red Rajah was made of sterner stuff. He knew his immense superiority in numbers, and determined to use it.

While his own crew was boarding the corvette on the starboard side, the second war-boat swept round on the other tack, and ran up alongside of the Englishman on the port side.

The third pirate luffed up on the corvette's quarter, just as the Rajah was boarding, and sent a whole volley of grape shot into the cabin windows, and rattling over the decks. Then all three grappled the man-of-war together, and the wild devils of Malays climbed on board like a swarm of ants.

The Englishman lost his chance of victory in that rush. He had fancied that it was impossible for wild, undisciplined Malays, poorly provided with fire-arms, to stand up against hearty, beef-fed sailors, well armed.

Inside of five minutes, attacked in front, flank and rear by merciless devils who gave no quarter, the bold Briton began to realize that in catching the Red Rajah he had caught a Tartar. In ten minutes more, beaten down to the deck, and run through and through by the spear of a wild Dyak, the imprudent captain breathed his last, and the Red Rajah had triumphed.

*The Malay pirates poison their krisses with pineapple juice. The kriss is a long dagger with a wavy serpentine double edge, peculiar to the Malays.

His victory had cost him dear. No quarter on either side was given or asked. The pistols of the corvette's crew had done terrible execution, and at least a hundred and fifty of the Malays were killed and wounded. But all of the Englishmen, without exception, were down, and the Rajah was alone in his glory.

He gave a few brief orders, and the merciless character of the man and his crew were fully exhibited in them.

All the killed and wounded, English and Malay, were coolly thrown overboard. The pirates could not be burdened with such trash, and so saved the expense of a surgeon. The Malay sea-rovers bear a strong resemblance, in their total disregard of human life, to the old Norse Berserkers and Vikings, who once tyrannized over all Northern Europe.

The Red Rajah himself was a typical sea-king. His lofty stature, his wonderful prowess in the fight, his long, wavy hair and long mustache made him look like one. His rich dress, glittering with jewels, was now all covered with blood from collar to hem. His feet waded in it ankle deep, and yet he was unwounded. The terrible piratical prince appeared to bear a charmed life.

While the obedient crew dragged the dead bodies to the open ports, to fling them overboard, the Rajah appeared to be considering something. He walked the quarter-deck of the sloop-of-war, casting an occasional glance up at her rigging. One of his own men was at the wheel, steering the collection of vessels, which were drifting seaward before the wind.

The chief of one of his war-boats came up to him, as he paced up and down.

"Great Rajah!" he said, hesitatingly, "far be it from me to disturb my lord; but the men report a steamer in sight, and after us."

As he spoke, the Rajah turned round and looked in the direction indicated by the other.

Not far from the coast of Papua, was a moving column of smoke, that indicated a steamer. She was coming toward them most unmistakably.

The Rajah shook off his reverie. He turned, and addressed the captain:

"Tell the men to collect all the arms of the dead Englishmen. They must learn to use the weapons of the Christian dogs. Let all of my men go back to their prahus. We will carry away all the powder and shot of the Christians, and burn their ship before the steamer comes near us."

He went forward, and personally superintended the collection of the arms. The Red Rajah was obviously well acquainted with the merits of modern improvements in fire-arms, and capable of availing himself of them. The magazine of the corvette was rifled, and boxes of ammunition, most precious of prizes, transferred to the pirate war-boats.

All the guns of the corvette were dragged to the middle of the vessel, and pointed so as to direct their fire out of one broadside. Double charges, and three cannon balls apiece, were loaded into them, and the guns were primed.

Then the Rajah ordered all his men aboard their vessels, and remained alone in the corvette. The three war-boats cast off their grappling-irons, and went to leeward of the ship, awaiting the coming of the Rajah. The latter arranged a train of powder to communicate with all the guns in succession. Powder was plentiful. He scattered it thickly all over the deck among the guns; made little heaps of it on the cheeks of the carriages; and finally made a second train, leading down the open hatchway into the magazine below.

The pirates only took away the small arms, ammunition and a few casks of powder. What remained in the ship weighed several tons.

"If the Englishman doesn't sicken at *that*, he'll be a stout fellow," said the Rajah, sardonically, as he surveyed the preparations. By his orders all the sails of the corvette had been lowered to the deck, the slings of the yards being cut. The corvette lay with her naked masts pointing to the sky, drifting in the current setting seaward. The Red Rajah took a last look astern. The steamer was in full sight, coming on at full speed. From her appearance he conjectured her to be French, although she carried no flag as yet. She was not more than a mile off now.

"Time for work now," muttered the pirate. "Let us set the trap."

He picked up a musket, left leaning against the port, and examined it. A long, thin cord of Japanese silk twine was fastened to the trigger. The Rajah stepped to the side and waved his hand to the men in the war-boats. It could now be seen that two long cables were stretched, head and stern, from the corvette to two of the pirate craft. As he waved

his hand, the men in the war-boats strained on the cables, so as to interpose the ship's hulk between them and the coming steamer. The Rajah stayed on board, training the guns carefully, so as to point low. When he saw that the steamer was still coming, head on to the ship, he blew his whistle, stepped to the side opposite, knelt down, placed the muzzle of the musket in a heap of loose powder, and cocked the piece.

A canoe was waiting for him under the ship's side, into which he leaped, and was rapidly rowed to the chief war-boat.

There he stood, on the roof of the poop-cabin, his eyes sternly fixed on the swiftly-advancing steamer, still holding in his hand the thin string that was to spring the trap to hurl so many souls into eternity. As the Red Rajah looked out on his enemies, all the softness was gone from his face. He resembled Lucifer, the fallen angel, defying the Almighty from the hell into which his crimes had flung him.

The crews of the war-boats strained on the cables, and carefully shielded themselves behind the hull of the corvette. The steamer, as if suspecting some trap, moved off in a wide circle, to bring her guns to bear. But the Red Rajah only laughed his own sardonic laugh, as he waved his hand to direct his vessels to the right.

"You may circle and circle," quoth the pirate chief, aloud, as he surveyed the enemy; "but 'ware the tiger's claws, if you come near!"

Suddenly he gave a violent start. Some one touched him on the arm.

He looked round, and, for the first time, became conscious that little Marguerite was on deck! There she was, close to him, her eyes fixed on his imploringly, and full of tears. The poor child was pale as death.

Old Marie was on her knees, still conning her rosary, and repeating Ave Marias as fast as she could say them. The old woman was nearly demented with terror.

In the overmastering excitement of the fight, the Rajah had forgotten all about them both!

"Grand Dieu, Marguerite!" he exclaimed, starting back; "why are you not below? Suppose you had been killed! Here, Ali! Hassan! Mohammed! How dare you leave this girl exposed to danger? Thousand devils! If she is hurt, I'll throw you all overboard, curse you!"

The men he addressed cowered before the savage glare of his eyes, but little Marguerite herself spoke.

"It was all my fault, my lord Rajah," she said, pleadingly. "I could not go below, though they asked me."

"You have done wrong, child," he said, sternly. "Suppose a stray shot had come your way?"

"And why not?" said Marguerite, sadly. "Oh, my lord Rajah! you have been so good and kind to poor Marguerite. Why should you be so cruel to others? There is yet time to flee without doing more murder. Spare those poor creatures coming up now!"

The Red Rajah looked at her with a peculiar smile.

"Would they spare *me*?" he asked, as he pointed, with a hand all covered with blood, at the advancing steamer. "What, think you, would be my fate if I let them come near me? What right have they in these seas, more than I? Be still, child! My life, and that of all those with me, hang on the destruction of yonder steamer."

"My lord," she said, clasping her hands, "you can escape. Your vessels are so swift, and the wind so strong, that you can escape, if you will. You have been so mighty in fight, that you can afford to lose the cheap triumph of a cold-blooded murder."

The Red Rajah started and frowned. He looked down upon the fragile figure of the girl, with a glance half-angry, half-scornful.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "How dare you preach to the Red Rajah on his own quarter-deck, with an enemy bearing down on him? Girl, go below!"

He pointed, imperiously, to the stairway of the cabin as he spoke, but Marguerite never stirred. The little creature looked up into his eyes, with a quiet courage astonishing in one so fragile.

"My lord," she said, and her voice quivered as she spoke, "you have been very kind to Marguerite. Grant her this one request. Spare those poor people, and fly."

The Red Rajah stared at her in amazement.

"Do you know who I am, girl?" he asked. "Look at this hand. Remember what you have seen. Remember my name, and then dare to ask the Red Rajah for mercy."

Marguerite made a step nearer to him.

"My lord Rajah," she said, quietly, "for the last time, I ask you to spare those people. See—I ask it on my knees. The demoiselle De Favannes begs their lives of you. The Red Rajah ought not to let a lady kneel in vain."

As she spoke she cast herself at his feet.

The Red Rajah looked down on her, not unkindly. She was very beautiful, as she knelt there pleading for mercy. He softly stroked her long, black curls, with a half-smile at her boldness, but his eye was cold and pitiless.

"I am very sorry, my child," he said, in his soft, deep voice; "but what you ask is impossible."

Marguerite rose to her feet, and confronted him again, with a strange light in her eyes.

"Enough!" she said. "You have shown me what I have to expect from you. Now, listen: You think you have me safe, and can refuse me as you please. Behold, then."

Before the pirate chief suspected her intention, the girl had sprung to the side of the vessel, and leaped on the low bulwarks. She stood there, with one little foot on the chase of a brass swivel-gun, the other on the bulwarks, suspended over the sea.

"Behold, my lord Rajah!" she cried. "There is the sea, and there are the sharks. You wish to keep me, but, on the faith of Marguerite de Favannes, if you do not cease your design, I will leap into the sea at once. Nay, not one step nearer, or you shall never see Marguerite again."

The Red Rajah turned deadly pale when he saw the frail girl suspended over the sea. The determination of her face showed that she was in grim earnest, and the sea was full of ravenous sharks.

"Come down, Marguerite," he faltered. "I promise—only come down."

As he spoke, he dropped the string in his hand, and held out his arm to rush toward her. The girl leaped down on deck, and the Rajah's vessel moved out at the wave of the chief's hand. The hawsers at either end of the corvette were dropped, and, as if by magic, the three war-boats were covered with sails in a moment.

The people of the steamer, seeing preparations for hasty flight, bore down at full speed on the corvette.

Then something unforeseen happened. Marguerite, happy in seeing that they were escaping, had forgotten all about the innocent-looking string that lay on the deck, fast running out over the bulwarks, as the swift war-boat skimmed away.

Suddenly she felt something catch in her foot, and found that it was entangled in a maze of twine. She had stepped on the end of the coils inadvertently.

A thin string, dripping with water, was seen to rise from the sea between the Rajah's war-boat and the corvette.

There was a flash, and the roar of twenty heavy guns, directed full on the steamer. Then a wider flash, a more tremendous roar, followed by the spectacle of the great ship become a volcano of fire and smoke, falling in a shower of burning fragments all over the steamer.

Overcome with horror, Marguerite sunk on her knees, while the Rajah pointed with a triumphant sneer to the disabled steamer. She was on fire in fifty places, and poor Marguerite was her unwitting destroyer.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHALER.

THE broad, beautiful sea was curled into glad ripples, all over its dark surface, when a young man in a small canoe, out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, suddenly uttered a glad cry, as he beheld a little white speck on the northern horizon.

The man was Claude Peyton, and was all alone.

The little white speck at first hardly visible on the blue line of the horizon, increased every moment in size, as the canoe sped blithely to meet it. At last it resolved itself into a square-rigged vessel—a small brig, close-hauled, standing west.

The canoe, going free, rapidly approached the other. First, the stranger's royals appeared above the sea. Then, bit by bit, topgallantsails and topsail became visible. At last, Peyton could see the fore-course slowly lifting, and it was soon followed by the checkered black and white hull of a regular old-fashioned brig.

The canoe was going like a race-horse, and rapidly closed

in toward the brig. Within a quarter of a mile of her at last, the young adventurer was cheered by the knowledge that he was noticed. The brig backed her main-topsail, and lay to, waiting for him, while Peyton ran down on her quarter, and brought up alongside.

A round, red face, fringed with black whiskers, looked over the brig's quarter, and a rough voice hailed him.

"Boat ahoy! Who the Old Harry are you?"

Claude Peyton laughed aloud. He did not wonder at the question. His appearance was certainly quite peculiar. He had no clothes save a small kilt of Papuan manufacture. The savages had loaded him with bracelets and necklaces of beads, which he had neglected to take off, and his hair was frizzed out in regular Papuan style. In every thing but color, he might have been a perfect Feejee or Papuan.

The honest captain evidently took him for one at first. But his white skin, (now pretty well tanned), and the big brown beard he wore, more particularly puzzled the mariner.

Claude laughed aloud at the brusque question, but answered, plain enough, in English.

"I'm a white man, who has just escaped from the savages of New Guinea, by running off and stealing a canoe. Can I come aboard or not?"

"A white man! God bless me!" exclaimed the kind-hearted sailor. "Come aboard? Yes; certainly, by all means. Here, catch this rope. Eh! Mr. Jones! Mr. Edwards! Here's a white man, come all the way from New Guinea, in a savage canoe. Come on board, sir, come on board. Never heard of such a thing in my life. Why, you must have come over twelve hundred miles in that little cockleshell."

Bustling about, and talking alternately to the young stranger and his mates, the captain used his best endeavors to help Peyton aboard.

His reception, as soon as they found what he was, was cordial beyond measure. Inside of half an hour he was seated at dinner with Captain Briggs, of the good brig Lively Sally, from London, on a whaling voyage. The captain supplied him with a suit of his own clothes, and the hands of the steward, who had formerly been a barber, it appeared, were busy with the scissors, clipping the luxuriant growth of frizzled hair from his head. No one would have recognized, in the bronzed but gentlemanly-looking young sailor, with close-cut hair and well-trimmed beard, the wild-looking savage who had come alongside in the morning.

"And now, my dear sir," said the polite captain, a fine specimen of the honest sailor, "I'm sorry, but, I'm afraid you'll have to cruise about with me after whales a bit, before you can get aboard a ship bound your way. You say you're fond of adventure; so I suppose you'll not object to whaling a bit."

"Not in the slightest," returned Claude; "I've always had a great desire to see a whale caught."

"Which you shall very soon, sir," said the captain. "But, tell me how you got into this part of the world, if not too bold."

"I started from America in my own yacht two years ago," replied Peyton. "We cruised all over the Pacific and Malaysia, but the yacht got strained a bit, in a typhoon, and I had to sell her at Sydney. A rich young fool, fresh from the mines, bought her for a big price, and I was left all alone in Sydney. I saw a French vessel in the harbor, which was going back to the Marquesas Islands, with stores for the French Governor there; and I took a fancy that I'd like to see those islands. They took me there, and I was bored to death. However, I didn't have long to stay there. A French frigate, called the *Philomèle*, arrived at the islands, bearing orders to supersede the old Governor, and send him to Pondicherry. I was permitted to take passage with them, to which I owe the wreck on the Papuan coast, and my twelve months' captivity."

"Wonderful, upon my soul," remarked the captain; "but tell me—was any one taken prisoner with you?"

"Five of us escaped from the wreck," replied Peyton.

"The captain and marquis I saw eaten with my own eyes. I was saved by the accident of having a sacred *taboo*-mark on my breast. But there is a mystery about the other two. They had got all ready to kill them, a sweet little girl, the Governor's daughter, and her old nurse. I tried to save the child, but they tore me away, when a lot of fellows in red, with guns, came up and began firing into the savages, and drove them away. The savages carried me off so quick that I could not tell if the child was killed or not. But if such a thing is possible, if the poor child is alive any

where, I will hunt her out, if I have to cruise all over the Malay archipelago after the cursed pirates."

"Very good, indeed, sir," said Captain Briggs, absently.

Peyton saw that his thoughts were not by any means on the fate of pretty little Marguerite.

A hoarse shout from the mast-head, coming down the companionway, at this moment startled the captain with sudden excitement. He leaped to his feet, clapped his oil-skin hat on his head in an instant, and echoed the cry with his jolly old voice.

"THERE SHE BLOWS!"

It was the well-known signal of a school of whales in sight. Captain Briggs forgot politeness and every thing else in his eagerness, as he rushed up-stairs in a tremendous hurry.

"WHERE AWAY?" he yelled, as soon as his mouth cleared the companionway.

"Port bow, sir," replied the man at the mast-head.

Claude Peyton was already on deck behind the captain. His heart leaped with excitement as he looked to the windward, and beheld the whole sea all alive with little white spouts, and with huge whales leaping out of the water in unwieldy gambols, the spray glittering in the declining sun.

It was a large-sized school of whales, and the Lively Sally was within a quarter of a mile of them.

CHAPTER V.

LEVIATHAN.

THE expanse of ocean covered with spouting whales, the enormous size of the creatures themselves, seemed to Claude Peyton, when he came on deck, to preclude the possibility of successful attack by such puny creatures as man. Every now and then one of the monsters would leap right out of the water in play, showing a carcass that looked as large as the brig itself.

But the men were all merrily at work, laughing and joking, as they made their preparations to pursue their gigantic prey.

"Now, Mr. Peyton," cried jolly Captain Briggs, as the young man stood by the binnacle, watching the busy scene. "You said you'd like to see a sperm whale killed, and here's a big school of them right alee. D'ye want to come in my boat?"

"Thanks, captain," said Claude. "The very thing I would have asked, but feared to be in the way."

"No fear," said the captain, heartily. "You shall come. All you have to do is to sit still."

Five minutes afterward the order was given to "lower away," and four whale-boats dropped simultaneously from the side of the Lively Sally, and pulled away at racing speed for the school, right toward the setting sun.

Claude sat in the stern of the captain's boat, and, being quite unemployed, was able to watch the whole chase, which he did with a keen pleasure amounting to intoxication.

Nearer and nearer comes the school of whales. Absorbed in their gambols with each other, they have not noticed the white whale-boats, almost invisible in the curling foam of the waves. The chief mate's boat has drawn ahead of the rest, and shoots on almost into the midst of the whales. Claude feels all the mad excitement of the race, and longs to pull an oar himself, to help on his own boat. The men in the chief mate's boat strain hard at the tough ash, and Claude sees the mate himself rising up in the bow, with the glittering harpoon in his hand. He holds it in both hands, point upward, close to the great black body of an enormous whale, that "breaches" within twenty feet of the boat.

Claude sees the huge head, as large as a small house, rush boldly out of the sea, the white water foaming and glittering as it rains off the immense mass. Then the mate casts the harpoon, with all his force, up in the air, the weapon describing a graceful curve, and plunging, point down, into the whale's side.

"Stern all!" yells the mate, as the unwieldy mass before him receives the stroke.

The great cachalot leaps clear out of the water as it feels the sting of the harpoon; and then, lashing the waters with its flukes till all the sea around is white with foam, down, down it goes into the dark bosom of the ocean.

And at the same instant, as if by magic, every whale of the school disappears.

The ocean is all alive for a few seconds with the "flukes" of the alarmed animals, hastily "peaked," as they all dive.

The boats toss their oars at the signal, and wait. Down, down, down goes the whale, with no signs of relaxation in speed. The captain's boat rows up hastily to the other's assistance, and the line of the second boat is quickly attached to eke out the first. The whale takes the whole of the first line and still "sounds" as rapidly as ever, till that, too, is nearly gone, and a *third* line is attached. The monster must have gone down in his first burst over two-thirds of a mile. The line runs out as rapidly as ever, and the whole transaction has not occupied two minutes yet. The third line runs out slower, and finally stops. The whale is coming up to breathe.

No one can tell when or where he will breach. All they can do is to wait. Presently there is a rushing sound under the water, a sound as of many huge bodies forcing their way. Claude Peyton sees the captain's red face turn pale as he looks over the side.

"Pull! pull, boys!" he fairly yells to the men, and oars are flashing in the sun as the boats pull desperately away from a common center.

But swifter than the light "cedars" is the rush of Leviathan, mad with rage and half blind, as he comes to the surface. Claude is conscious of a tremendous confusion; a roaring as of ten thousand bulls around the boat; the sea lashed into white foam by fifty leaping monsters; as the whole school of whales breaches together all around and among the boats.

The scene that followed beggars description. The loud bellowing or blowing of breaching whales, the sounding blows of the huge flukes on the crashing boats and water, the cries of the seamen, some drowning, others in dread of the sharks, were mingled with the hoarse orders shouted by the captain and mates. The sun was half-way below the horizon, and darkness was swiftly advancing to lend new horrors to the situation. There were only two boats left afloat, for the chief and the third mate's conveyances had disappeared. Claude had started to see a whale caught, and he seemed likely to be caught himself, instead.

But, as if satisfied with the discomfiture of their enemies, the whales now swam off, and left them to pick up their companions, just as the sun set. Only six of the last boat's crew were saved; and the captain, with much regret, gave the order to cut the harpoon-line, that was still attached to the first whale struck.

"Don't do it, captain!" cried the second mate, earnestly. "The devils have given us so much trouble, that we ought to have our revenge out of him. There's over four hundred barrels in that fellow, if there's a gallon."

"We can never do it, Coffin," answered the captain. "It's nigh dark now."

"Let me foller him alone, Cap.," cried the undaunted Coffin. "He's fast to my boat. Don't let me lose him. I kinder hate ter let him go."

"As you will," answered Briggs. "But I'm afraid to let you go."

"Lord love you, Cap., I'll fix him!" cried the mate. "Here, you extra fellers, get into Cap.'s boat. Don't want no loafers here."

"Let me pull an oar!" suddenly cried Peyton; why he could not tell; "I've done nothing all day."

"Hurry up yer cakes, then," was the hasty reply, as the rescued seamen rapidly crowded into the captain's boat. A moment later, Peyton was at the stroke-oar of the mate's boat.

He had hardly taken his seat when the boat was pulled bows under by the whale, and dashed off into the twilight, at the rate of ten miles an hour. Peyton caught a hasty glimpse of the brig, about a quarter of a mile to leeward, and astern, beating up to rescue the overlaid boat. Then he had to give his attention to bailing out the water that came curling in over the gunwale.

Mr. Coffin was a thoroughbred Nantucket whaler. No man of any other nationality would have dared to hold on to such an ugly customer as this whale had proved to be, with a dark night coming on. But Ezekiel Coffin couldn't see the point of losing an eight-thousand-dollar whale, for the sake of any danger, however appalling. And the natural love of soul-stirring excitement peculiar to the American temperament made Claude Peyton a volunteer in the hazardous feat they were about to attempt.

So the boat dashed off into the fast-gathering darkness, drawn at the end of a whale-line by the most powerful animal in existence.

Within an hour after dark they had pulled up, hand-over-hand, by means of the whale-line, close to the monster, which they could see plainly in the bright moonlight. It was all alone now. The drag on its powers, produced by towing the boat so many miles, had enabled its companions to leave it far behind, and the daring Coffin at once seized his lance, to strike the fatal blow.

The boat shoots through the white foam alongside of the great black body, closer, closer, and still closer. Peyton strains at his oar, wild with excitement. The end of their dangerous chase is coming at last. Human skill and courage are about to vanquish brute force. Now the boat's nose touches the whale. The keen lance-blade gleams in the moonlight for an instant. Then the powerful arm of the sailor drives it deep into the black side of the whale, and a great rush of red blood spouts forth.

"Starn all!" yells Coffin, and the oars flash in the water as the boat tries to escape from the rage of the monster. In vain. Stung by the wound, and wild for revenge, the mountain of flesh lashes around in all directions. The mighty mass of the forked flukes waves over the doomed boat for an instant. The next, it descends with all the force of a cannon-shot, and crushes boat and crew alike into a shapeless mass, buried in the water.

All but one. Peyton's life was saved as if by a miracle. Involuntarily he leaped from the boat, just before the terrible black flukes descended. Striking the water head-foremost, he went down into the depths ahead of the boat. The blow of the cachalot's tail crushed boat and crew to atoms. Peyton felt the shock of the blow transmitted to him under the surface and was almost stunned. Looking up through the dark waters, he saw the immense body of the whale moving off from the scene with great rapidity, between him and the pale moonlight. The next minute he rose to the surface, panting for breath, and found himself all alone in the midst of the boundless Pacific.

Not a single soul of the boat's crew was to be seen. Entangled in the coils of the whale-line, and the wreck of the whale-boat, smashed out of all semblance of humanity, they were dragged along, senseless corpses, in the wake of the mighty bull-cachalot.

And Claude Peyton was left all alone, swimming for his life in the midst of the fathomless ocean.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT DEEP.

WE left poor Claude Peyton, so long buffeted about by adverse fortune, in a very perilous position. His boat staved to pieces by a sperm whale; all his companions crushed to death; he was left alone, in the midst of a wilderness of waters, swimming for his life.

For a few minutes, stunned by the suddenness of the calamity, he was hardly conscious of its extent. By the mere instinct of self-preservation, he paddled feebly with his hands to keep himself afloat.

The water was perfectly smooth. The great white moon overhead looked placidly down on what seemed to be a sea of oil. Not a breath of air was stirring. The distant splashing ripple of the great whale, swimming away from the scene of the disaster, soon ceased to be audible, and a dead, solemn silence fell upon the face of the deep.

In a very few minutes the Virginian regained his coolness, and mastered the simple details of his awful position. There he was, all alone, a helpless mortal. The only question was, how long could he keep afloat?

The answer would have been easy enough in fresh water. Not an hour, in all probability.

But, out at sea, the conditions were different. The water of the open ocean is so much greater in density than that of rivers, that a man may float for several hours without much exertion.

But what then? A few hours, more or less, was all the difference. At last he would get tired of even that slight exertion. And then would come the last struggle. The feeble hands, groping vainly in the water for support, would find none. The mouth would sink below the surface of the waves, and the last gasping struggle for breath would only hasten the end. The rushing brine would choke the laboring lungs, and down, down, down, down, would go the

helpless body, at the mercy of ocean currents and voracious sharks.

As Peyton revolved the dismal thoughts in his mind, a sense of overwhelming misery and terror swept over him. The moon in the sky seemed to reel, and everything turned dark before his eyes. The taste of the salt waves, entering at mouth and nostrils, and making him gasp and choke, involuntarily recalled him to himself. With a desperate effort, he gained his equilibrium, and tried to throw off the thoughts of danger.

After all, he could swim for hours. If he must die, it was time enough when he was exhausted. Not now, when he was full of vigorous strength. He must keep cool and husband his powers. An American is not made to drown like a rat.

With these thoughts he calmed himself. Beating the water slowly with his feet, he extended his hands on each side, just paddling enough to keep erect. He remembered to have read of the powers of swimming of the Polynesians, who swim nearly upright. The motion he soon discovered to be far less exhausting.

The discovery elated him. He remembered hearing of instances where the savages of the Marquesas had been nearly two days in the water, and surviving.

Why should not a white man do the same? True, he had never studied the art of swimming upright. But he had often seen the Kanakas at Owyhee, swimming about outside the rollers. He would imitate them.

Peyton was a cool, brave man. He would not give up till he was compelled to. He began to progress slowly through the water, keeping a sharp look-out all around him. He fancied that he might very possibly come across some remnants of the wrecked boat. He remembered very well the direction in which the whale had gone. It was straight toward that group of stars just rising in the east. They were now clear of the horizon.

A thrill of hope came through the young Virginian's heart, as he recognized the constellation. It was the brilliant and far-famed Southern Cross. It seemed as if God had set it in the heavens, and made it rise where it did on that night, on purpose to encourage him.

The sublime words of the Gospel swept through his brain, as he swam steadily on, with his eyes fixed on the fiery cross. "If God careth for the sparrows, how much more shall he care for you, oh! ye of little faith."

Peyton lost all his fears in a moment. He felt that he should be saved yet, desperate as his position seemed to be. He swam slowly and steadily on, never relaxing his gaze on the lustrous symbol of Christianity. He made but little effort, and yet advanced all the while.

Alone in the middle of the broad Pacific, he lifted up his heart, and prayed to the God of the universe.

And an answer came to his prayer, when he hardly expected it. Several dark objects became visible ahead of him, and he knew that he was saved.

Swimming more rapidly on, he soon laid his hand on the well-known rounded loom of a floating oar. A cry of thanksgiving and joy burst from his lips, as he clutched the precious timber, and felt its buoyant support.

There were several more floating objects, within a circuit of some fifty yards. Peyton swam about from one to another, gathering them together. They proved to be oars and stretchers, with one or two boards from the wreck of the boat; every thing, in fact, that had not been entangled in the whale line and carried off by the angry leviathan.

He collected the pieces of wreck together, and felt hopeful. He need not drown now. There was enough timber to make a float, which would carry him half-way out of the water. When he had gathered together five oars, three stretchers, with a piece of board that had been a seat, he spied one more object close to him, bobbing about on the water. It was apparently a round piece of cork. Swimming to it, and pulling it toward him, he discovered that a cord was attached to its under surface. It puzzled him, what it could be.

Remembering, however, that the cord would be useful to bind together his little float, he pulled it along behind him, and swam back. The cord was an especially valuable gift, just now. Then he remembered that he had no means of cutting it. He had come out in the clothes of Captain Briggs, but he had no knife. Indeed his pockets were empty.

"Never mind," said he to himself; "we will find some way, if we have to use our teeth."

So he embraced the bundle of oars and stretchers in his arms, and began to pass the welcome cord around them. But before he had pulled up more than five or six feet of the cord, he found that it was attached at the other end to a stick or pole of some sort. He pulled this slowly up to the surface, and the mystery was explained.

It was a whaling lance.

These weapons are so apt to be dropped into the sea, that a cord and float are kept attached to them in most cases. This very circumstance had caused the rest of the lances to be entangled and carried off by the whale. But the one carried by the unhappy mate had fallen clear in some manner, and now remained to assist our hero.

Peyton gave a shout of joy at the discovery. Only night, he was aware, had saved him, so far, from the attentions of the sharks. When morning came, and those gentry woke up, he would be seen in all probability, and as certainly attacked. And here was a weapon of defense, thrown into his hands quite Providentially. More than ever, he felt that he should be saved. God could not mean to slay him, after such wonderful goodness so far.

He abandoned the intention of making use of the rope. The lance was too precious to be lost, as it might well be if detached from the float.

After a little thought, however, he hit upon a way of fastening his raft together, without the cord. Stripping off his jacket, which he had hitherto retained, he cut and tore it into strips, with the aid of the lance. The blade of a whaling lance is broad and thin, made of the finest steel, and kept to a razor-like edge. He had no difficulty in his task.

Tying the strips together, and making a rope of them, he soon manufactured his little float. Four of the oars he made into a bundle, tied together at each end by stout strips of cloth. The fifth oar he arranged crosswise, in the middle of the other four, so as to stretch out on each side, and keep the bundle from rolling over. The stretchers—short, square pieces of wood, about two feet long—he thrust in at the junction, and placed the piece of board above all.

He had thus manufactured a float on which he could sit astride, and have most of his body above the water. It was not buoyant enough to support his whole weight, standing. The oars were too small. When he stood up, the whole raft was submerged, leaving him up to his ankles in water. His footing was too tottering in that position, also. So he sat down, and let his legs hang in the water. When he did so, the raft rose, and he sat on a board about two inches above the water.

He could do nothing more during the night, but strengthen his raft. He swam about, doing his best to make it strong and compact, sacrificing his vest, and finally his flannel shirt, for the purpose. Before morning, he felt satisfied that his little conveyance would stand the ordinary strain of the winds and waves; and, commending himself to the protection of Providence, Claude Peyton fell asleep on his raft, extended on the bundle of oars.

When he awoke, it was early dawn. The ocean all round him was curling into little white waves, under a fresh breeze. The red glow of sunrise, spread all over the east, warned him that the day, with its light and its dangers, was fast approaching. Claude shivered as the chilly breeze struck on his bare flesh. Necessity had compelled him to sacrifice all of his clothes except a pair of trowsers, and he was cold. But he soon had other matters to attend to.

Simultaneously with the dawn, the two grand springs of human action exerted their influence over him, excited by the view of different objects. Hope and fear together seized him.

There, in the midst of the rosy eastern glow, a large ship appeared, under all sail, bearing down directly upon him. From the loftiness of her masts, and the immense spread of her sails, compared with the hull, she was evidently a first-class clipper or a man-of-war.

Would she see him or not?

Hope cried out "Yes," and he gave an involuntary cry of joy.

It was checked, the next moment, by another sight.

A sharp, black object, resembling the end of a Turkish scimitar, was gliding across the track between him and the ship. It was the black fin of a shark.

He knew the sea was full of them. He had expected it all the time. And yet the sight of that ghostly, silently-gliding object, sent a cold thrill of dread through his veins.

A shoal of porpoises, a little distance off, were leaping out of the water, chasing each other in clumsy play. Albicores and bonitoes were hunting the flying-fish, beginning their sport with the coming of dawn. But Claude Peyton saw nothing else in all the ocean but that sharp, gliding, black fin, moving to and fro, like a sentry on post.

Had the shark seen him yet or not?

The question was answered a moment after. The black fin suddenly disappeared. Claude watched anxiously for its reappearance. Presently all doubt was removed. There was a ripple in the water, and the shark reappeared, shooting toward the raft like an arrow.

Peyton picked up the lance which had lain on the raft before him, and prepared to defend himself. He well knew the peculiarities of the fish in question, and how a successful defense was possible to a cool man, but he dreaded lest his little float should be injured in the struggle.

The shark swam up to the raft and halted. It appeared to be puzzled at the curious construction. From the cruciform nature of the float, the fish could not get at the man in the center, except by coming in between the arms. Claude could see it plainly now—a large shark, nearly fifteen feet in length.

The monster gave a wag of its screw-like tail, and glided off in a circle round the float. Claude watched it carefully, till it had made the entire circuit, and resumed its original position. Then the animal, as if resolved to make but one rush, turned its great head inward, the dark, green eyes glaring hungrily, and dashed at Peyton's left leg, which hung in the water.

The Virginian was too quick for the shark.

As the creature rushed forward, he lifted his leg, and wheeled swiftly around so as to drop it on the other side, behind the sheltering arms of the cross.

He had inserted two of the boat-stretchers at the intersection, pointing downward, on purpose to be in the way of any such attack.

The shark came on with such a rapid dart that the young man had only time to drop his leg over, when the broad shovel-nose of the creature came up against the cross of the float, with a bump that nearly unsettled the rider.

Thrown forward by the concussion, the lance which he held in his hand was plunged deep into the soft skull of the shark, and nearly buried there. The amazed fish backed off immediately, taking the lance with it, but Peyton managed to clutch the rope in time to prevent losing it. He hung on like grim death, the shark backing away and shaking with desperate efforts, till the long, smooth blade of the weapon finally dragged out, and left Peyton, erect and triumphant, to haul it in for further operations.

The shark appeared to be disgusted with his trial. The brains were oozing out of a great hole in his head, but he did not appear to be much the worse for it. Still, he did not renew his attack on the float, and our hero could afford time to look around him for the ship.

He could see her plainly now, and not far off, either. Her sternsails and skysails were all spread, and she was coming on like a race-horse, between him and the rising sun.

But he had but a moment to catch the sight. His enemies were not done with him yet. As his gaze swept over the expanse of little curling waves, he was startled by the sight of at least twenty of the well-known sharp, scimitar-like fins, all coming straight for himself.

The telegraphy of the ocean had been at work, and all the hungry sharks in the neighborhood were darting toward their prey.

Claude Peyton felt a sinking at his heart, as he thought of the terrible odds against him, but he buckled manfully to his work, and the fight began.

Up came the ravenous monsters, each eager to be first. But the sight of the raft checked them all. The shark, like his land representative, the wolf and hyena, is a cowardly scavenger. He fears a trap.

The whole posse swam round and round, trying to find an opening. Claude kept a wary watch on their motions. At last, one of them dived down under the raft.

Peyton bent his looks down. He saw the gliding body sweeping round in a graceful curve, and then the monster turned swiftly over, showing his white belly and the gaping jaws far under the broad shovel-nose.

Now was the time.

Drawing up his feet, the young man plunged the keen lance down into the middle of the white belly, and drew it up, red with blood.

A great gash appeared in the shark, and the creature with drew hurriedly, with its entrails protruding from the wound. But Claude had hardly time to withdraw his weapon, when a second shark made a rush at his leg, in the corner of the float.

With an involuntary shout of terror, the Virginian withdrew it hastily, and darted the lance into his assailant's eye. The shark wriggled back desperately, only to give place to another on the other side.

The creatures were ravenously hungry, and grew bolder every moment. The whole attention of Claude was taken up in repelling their attacks, and he had the hardest work to maintain his balance. Again and again he escaped the snap of the sharp teeth only by a hair's breadth. If it had not been for his whaling-lance, he would have fared badly. That trusty weapon was all red with blood, and had been plunged into the bodies of six or seven sharks. But Peyton was growing weak with excitement and hard work. He could hardly ply his lance any longer. He dreaded the attack of the next shark, and still more, lest all of them should come together.

And together they were all coming, at last. Peyton shouted aloud with all his might, and splashed the water, in hopes to frighten off his hungry besiegers. They recoiled a little, and then swam closer in, stealthily and ominously, in a circle of hungry jaws and glaring eyes. A nightmare spell seemed to be cast over the beleaguered one. He stared stupidly at the circle of fierce eyes, without the power of motion.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAND OF THE MALAY.

Just at the very instant when all seemed lost, when our hero, weak and exhausted, could defend himself no longer, the regular thud and splash of oars came down on the breeze, and Peyton saw the sharks waver. The next minute, a loud shout from twenty throats close to them, followed by the rush of a large man-of-war's boat, scattered the cowardly creatures like a pack of curs.

Claude uttered a fervent "Thank God!" and turned round, to behold a long black boat full of men, steered by an officer with a gold band round his cap, and over the stern-sheets fluttered the flag of his own land, the glorious stars and stripes!

The sight was so unexpected, so utterly astounding, that Peyton hardly believed his eyes for a moment. But he was reassured by the friendly voice of the midshipman in the boat, addressing him in his own language.

"You seem to have had a hard time of it, messmate. We put out the boat just in time."

"You did, indeed," was all that our hero could say.

He was so exhausted that they had to lift him into the boat.

Once there, however, and on his way to the ship, which was hove-to, a few cable-lengths off, he quickly recovered. A drink of spirits put sufficient life in him to hear and answer the remarks of the midshipman.

"The look-out saw you first," explained the officer. "When the skipper heard of it, he ordered the jolly-boat ready. Then the look-out reported that you were at work fighting sharks, and the old man hove-to, and told us to pull like heroes. And so we did. Why, you don't appear to be hurt much."

"I am not," said Peyton; "only a little exhausted; and I'll be better presently. What is your vessel's name?"

"The Comanche," replied the lad. "She's a real clipper under canvas, and we carry a screw, too. Where do you hail from, old fellow?"

"That's rather a long story, young gentleman," said Claude, dryly. "I've been knocked about the world so infernally that I hardly know where I did come from. What's your captain's name?"

"Captain Pendleton," replied the youngster, stiffly. He did not like being called "young" by this half-naked stranger, picked up in mid-ocean. Besides, his curiosity had been balked by the other, and he resented that.

"Pendleton," repeated Peyton, thoughtfully; "I ought to know him. What is his Christian name?"

The midshipman stared aghast. Here was this unknown nobody, probably a foremast hand, claiming the acquaintance of the magnificent Captain Pendleton! Impudence!

"I think it's hardly probable, my man," he began, loftily, "that you are acquainted with Captain Pendleton. I don't think that he associates with men of your stamp."

Peyton smiled.

"How do you know what my stamp may be, young man?" he asked. "You may be mistaken, you know. If your captain is Horace Pendleton, of Maryland, he and I went to school together, and graduated at Annapolis, when you were in long-clothes."

The conceited young officer held his peace. He began to doubt whether the stranger *was* only a foremast hand, after all.

When they arrived at the side of the Comanche, and the stranger mounted the side-ladder, his doubts were very soon removed.

As a matter of course, the shipwrecked or rescued man was at once brought before the captain, and the midshipman had the pleasure of seeing a delighted and astonished recognition take place.

The captain was indeed Claude's old friend, Horace Pendleton; and the two had not seen each other since the time when they had served together as "middies" in the same ship. Claude had resigned, after a few years' service, to accept a large fortune left him by an uncle in Baltimore; and Pendleton had risen to the rank of commander.

"Why, Claude Peyton, my dear old friend!" exclaimed the delighted Pendleton; "you have dropped from heaven, or sprung out of the sea, to comfort my loneliness. I swear I never was so glad to see a man in all my life. Gentlemen, this is my old friend, Mr. Peyton, my classmate at Annapolis, fifteen years ago. He has sprung from the sea in the nick of time. Claude, old fellow, come right into my cabin, as quick as ever you can, and let's get some decent clothes on you. Why, man, where have you been? Never mind. Come along."

And he carried off Claude in triumph to his cabin, where, for the second time in twenty-four hours, that much-buffed individual was accommodated with a new suit of clothes.

During his toilet, and after, he gave a succinct account of his adventures since he last saw his friend Pendleton, and the latter was wonderstruck.

Claude was introduced to the officers of the Comanche, and found them very pleasant fellows, now that they knew him to be the friend of their captain. They were, of course, more or less affected with that supercilious self-conceit so common among the army and navy officers of the regular services. They imagined themselves the salt of the earth, and voted every one outside of their charmed circle nobodies; but once recognized, and on friendly terms, they were very nice fellows.

The Comanche was under orders to cruise among the outer Malay Islands for awhile, after which she was to proceed to Singapore, and thence to Calcutta.

When she so fortunately came across Peyton she had already been on the station some months, and was on her way to Singapore. Claude was very glad to hear this news. He had experienced so many trials within the year, that he was by no means sorry to get among the comforts of civilization again. He made a pleasant trip through the Spice Islands, with his old friend Pendleton, and finally found himself at anchor in the magnificent harbor of Singapore.

Peyton had visited this remarkable place before, but the view appeared to him as fresh as ever, as he stood on the quarter-deck of the Comanche, waiting for the captain's gig to take him ashore. Opposite to him was the broad esplanade in front of the town, which lay reposing against the side of a gentle slope and backed by lofty hills. The aspect of the buildings was full of picturesque romance, for Singapore lies in the heart of the East, between the Arabs and Hindoos on one side, and the Mongolians and Malays on the other.

When they went ashore, Peyton soon found a hearty welcome at the house of Mr. Earle, the resident partner of the house of Earle, Hoskins & Co., of Calcutta, Singapore, Canton, London, and New York, to whom he was well known in former times.

Mr. Earle was a large, florid Englishman, hard-headed and business-like. He had but one God—the almighty dollar; but one love on earth—his daughter. Of low and vulgar extraction himself, originally (his real name was Boggs, and he had taken his wife's name for her fortune), it was yet his prime ambition to see his daughter mated with some distinguished person, who could place her in SOCIETY.

"You see, sir," he observed, very frankly, to Peyton,

whom he admired immensely, as a man of some wealth, and still more, of excellent family; "when my Julia marries, she'll bring the man as gets her a plum—yes, sir, a plum*—and I've made up my mind as 'ow she shall 'ave a real gentleman—none of your stuck-up snobs, as can't show a pedigree, but a feller as can tell 'oo his great-grandfather's great-grandfather was, 'all the way up to the Conqueror."

It will be perceived, from the above, that Mr. Earle's aspirates were frequently neglected, and from the tone of his speech it may also be inferred that it was after dinner.

This was the fact. Pendleton and Claude had accepted the worthy merchant's invitation to "cut mutton" with him, as he termed it, and the three gentlemen were enjoying their sheroots after dinner, in the absence of the lady now under discussion.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS EARLE.

OLD EARLE'S florid face, with a ring of white hair surrounding it, glowed with self-satisfaction, as he continued his discourse.

"Yes, Mr. Peyton—yes, capting; and my Julia—though I say it, as shouldn't say it—is just as 'andsome a gal as you could see if you was hout on a 'oliday. She'd be just as fit to walk hinto 'is Royal 'Ighness' drawin'-room as many a 'aughty duchess I've knowed."

Claude smiled covertly at Pendleton. The latter took his cheroot from his mouth, and observed:

"I don't in the least doubt it, Mr. Earle. But, then, you must remember that we simple Americans have no dukes or duchesses, nor even royal highnesses."

"I know it, capting," answered the worthy merchant. "But then, you see, I've been in America myself, and I know 'ow much difference there is among you, too. Why, there's more pride in one of them 'ere Knickerbockers, or a Hef-hef-wee*, than hin many a lord. No, thank 'Eaven, capting, I ain't got any low, beastly pride about me, and I'd just as soon my Julia should 'ave a Hef-hef-wee as a Hinglish haristocrat. Mr. Peyton, sir, you ain't a-drinking. 'Elp yourself, and pass the bottle."

Claude's face was red with suppressed laughter, which he concealed by choking over his wine; but Mr. Earle was quite unconscious of the ludicrous effect of his cool proposition.

Pendleton was one of those quiet, grave, gentlemanly men who have acquired the art of appearing impassive under the cover of a black beard. By dint of stroking this, and humming and hawing a little, he managed to keep his countenance perfectly grave.

"Ah! yes—yes—yes, Mr. Earle," he drawled, pulling very hard at his beard; "and so you would just as soon Miss Julia should marry an F. F. V. as a lord? Ah! yes—I see. I assure you I feel complimented, and so does Mr. Peyton."

"No compliment at all, capting," answered the worthy man. "I'm a plain-spoken man, I am, and, dammy, if I like a man, I tell him so. There's no beastly pride about John Earle. I lived in America four or five year, afore I came 'ere, sir; dammy, I like the Americans. Yes, sir. Capting Pendleton, you ain't a-drinkin', sir. 'Elp yourself, and pass the bottle. No 'eeltaps, gents. I'm a-goin' to give you a toast, I am. Mr. Peyton, sir, fill your glass. 'Ere's a very good 'ealth and a hexcellent 'usband to my gal, Julia—bless 'er! And may I live to see my grand-children a-toddlin' round her 'eels, and we miles away from this blarsted 'ole of a hisland."

Claude and Pendleton swallowed the toast with all due honors to the fair Julia. Papa Earle had finished something over a bottle of port since dinner, and, as his utterance thickened, his affection for his daughter increased.

"Gents, both," he said, waving his wine-glass gracefully, "you don't know what a treasure the 'appy man will 'ave 'oo gets my Julia. She's the 'andsomest, the 'aughtiest, and the heducatedest gal in Singapore, if I do say it, as shouldn't say it. Why, bless your 'art, she knows as much as a Hoxford professor, she does. She can jabber French and Italian, sing hoperas, and you ought to see 'er at a 'op."

"A which?" inquired Pendleton, innocently.

"A 'op—a ball—a kick up at the governer' 'ouse—a dance. Lord, sir! She can dance like a syrup."

* The worthy gentleman means F. F. V., we presume.—[Ed.]

Here Claude Peyton could stand it no longer. Pendleton had been giving him sly winks for some time, with the malicious intention of provoking an explosion.

Mr. Earle's "syrup," whether he meant a seraph or a sylph, was one too much.

Forgetting politeness, etiquette, and all, he dashed from the piazza, and ran down the steps into the garden, where he disappeared behind a rose-thicket, and burst out, yelling with laughter.

The fuddled merchant turned, gravely, to Pendleton.

"I was afraid your friend 'ad been drinkin' too much, capting. I suppose 'e's awful sick just now. I'm very sorry for the young feller, capting; but if a man don't know 'ow to stop when 'e's 'ad enough, I ain't to blame. Me and you, capting, is temperate men. 'Ere's your good 'ealth, and 'opin' as 'ow we may see each hother hoften."

And Mr. Earle gravely pledged the captain in a tumbler of port wine, which he had filled by mistake.

Pendleton shook his head sagaciously.

"You say very true, Mr. Earle," he observed. "It is a sad spectacle to see one so young unable to carry off his bottle of port, but we must forgive him. Poor Peyton is an excellent fellow, Mr. Earle, and one of our best families."

"The very best, sir," returned the old gentleman, wagging his head knowingly, as he refilled his tumbler. "I've been at the 'Erald's office in Lunnun, and seen the Peyton pedigree. They was landed gentry in the hold country, afore Columbus was 'eard of. And many's the time as I've been on their place in Virginia. I tell you what it is, capting—if your friend and my Julia 'as a notion to 'itch 'osses together, I ain't the man to say 'em nay. No beastly pride about John Earle."

And he winked knowingly at the other, as he drained his second tumbler.

While the excellent master of the house was thus dispensing hospitality and praises of his Julia to the American captain, Claude Peyton had his laugh out, all to himself behind the rose thicket. When he was fairly over it, however, he felt very much ashamed of it, and did not dare to go back, till he had invented some excuse for his incivility, such as sickness, etc.

While revolving in his mind what to do, the flutter of a white dress at the turn of one of the long gravel walks caught his eye. Claude was a susceptible youth, and the sight of a woman's dress generally sent him off toward it. He strolled down the walk, with as much unconcern as he could assume; and, turning the curve, found himself before an arbor, all covered with camelias and tube-roses. In the arbor, as he had expected, was the Julia, whose praises had been so loudly sung since dinner-time.

Now, Julia Earle was an exceedingly handsome girl. Her father had not been far wrong, when he said that she was the handsomest, the haughtiest and best educated girl in Singapore. She was all that, and more, too. She would have challenged attention in any drawing-room. Julia was quite tall for a woman, above the average of her sex. Her face was severely beautiful, of the keen, aquiline type, with a short, curved upper lip, and a round, firm chin, that betokened it's owner to have a will of her own. Her eyes were very large, and blue, of that flashing, steely blue so seldom seen. Her hair was remarkably profuse, and of the brightest gold, thrown back in an imperial wave from her white forehead, and falling in a shower of curls over a jeweled comb at the back of the shapely head. Although so tall, Miss Earle possessed hands and feet of remarkable beauty, and was quite conscious of it.

Indeed, a certain air of haughty consciousness was the only defect in her beauty. She looked like a queen in her own right, and treated every one as if they had been her subjects.

Claude Peyton had seen her at the dinner-table, before. But the room, according to custom in that sultry climate, having been darkened to a sort of twilight, he had only obtained a general impression of a tall blonde, a creature he ordinarily detested. The fair Julia, moreover, had said not a word during dinner, except "Thank you," on one occasion. The Virginian's impression, therefore, had been decidedly unfavorable, and the vulgar praise of the muddy old father had disposed him to look upon the fair Julia as a "chip of the old block."

He was so struck with surprise at the actual beauty of the young lady, that he stood dumb for a few moments, hesitating whether to advance.

The beautiful Julia was lying back in the corner of a

large rustic seat of bamboo, with a book in her hand, which she laid down the moment she saw Peyton.

When she spoke, it was in a low, contralto voice, very deep and sweet, with a slight curl of the haughty lip.

"What? Are you tired of your wine already, Mr. Peyton? I thought that you gentlemen were safe to stay at the table till sunset. A cigar and a decanter are temptations but few can resist."

"May I ask who you mean by 'you,' Miss Earle?" inquired our hero, with a smile.

He thought to himself that this young lady was a curious creature, not to say rude.

"Oh! I mean you men," returned the lady; "perhaps I ought to say gentlemen, but then one sees so few nowadays."

"Pretty cool, that," muttered our hero; "this girl wants to fight, I see."

Aloud, he replied:

"I suppose it is the influence of the ladies that is lacking to reform them, Miss Earle. Woman rules the world, you know; and if she can not teach her subjects manners, it is most probably her own fault."

"I deny the inference," returned Miss Earle, brightening up. (She loved a conversational sparring match.) "Woman has no power. If she had, she would soon teach you men manners."

"And wherein have I failed in mine, Miss Earle?"

"In staying too long at the table, sir. It may do for old-fashioned Englishmen like pa. But you Americans have given up that custom, long ago."

Beyond the fact of referring to her father as "Pa," every thing about Miss Earle betokened a woman of education and refinement, with a keen, aggressive mind, fully up to the topics of the day. Peyton was charmed.

"I cry you mercy, Miss Earle," he said; "but I could not venture to dictate to a man in his own house, and I made my escape as soon as I decently could."

"You are forgiven, sir," returned the lady, graciously. "And now tell me how you like the East."

"Well enough to stay here for a long time, if I always had your company," returned Peyton, seating himself by the fair one, and doing the insinuating.

Julia looked at him out of her great, solemn eyes for a moment, as if a little puzzled. She frightened most men; but this handsome, impudent American was not to be scared away by proud looks. His merry brown eyes had a lurking humor in them, that told the fair Julia that he was actually amused with her—with her, the belle of Singapore.

She felt angry for one moment, but the next found it hard to resist his handsome face. Few women could, for Claude was one of those tall, graceful, active young fellows, who delight the fair sex at sight, and as his powers of mind were equal, he did not disappoint in conversation.

The fair Julia tried all her wit and sarcasm to put him down. She was fond of putting young men down. She found that he knew more than she did, and that his conversation was charming.

They soon fell into talking about books, and Peyton found that the young lady was a great admirer of Gail Hamilton, Mrs. Stowe, and the other American ladies who champion woman's rights.

But as the Virginian belonged to the opposite party, they soon fell into a lively discussion, which ended in leaving them better friends; for they respected each other. No young and pretty woman ever belongs to the woman's rights party seriously, and Miss Julia was by no means displeased to find her master. Few women are.

So they loitered in the arbor till the sun had set, leaving the bright moon high in heaven above them, set in a bed of glittering stars.

Claude began to like his beautiful companion very well. He had not met such a handsome and well-educated woman ever since he had left home, and the romantic surroundings contributed to make her interesting.

As the shades of evening drew on, their rambling talk left the subject of woman's rights gradually, and wandered to poetry—dangerous subject!

The sighing of the night-breeze, the perfume of the tuberose, the delicious trill of the bulbul, from the jasmine thicket close by, all began to have their influence on Claude, who was growing more tender every moment, and the lady less reserved.

But any love passage was prevented by the sudden apparition of a white-robed servant, who approached, salaaming.

He bore the sahib's compliments to the strange sahib and

the lady. They were recommended to enter the house, as tigers might be around. Julia Earle exhibited some alarm, and hurried in. Claude asked the *kitmuggar* if he was in earnest.

"Sartain, yes, sahib," the Bengal replied, bowing profoundly. "Tiger prowls round here every night. Go into Singapore. Kill Chinaman every night."

"The deuce!" ejaculated Peyton. "Pleasant country this, to live in, where you have to keep in the house at nights for fear of tigers."

And he followed his hostess into the drawing-room, where they played chess till ten o'clock. "Pa" did not put in an appearance. He was already fast asleep, and Pendleton was gone back to the ship.

Claude was installed in the merchant's house, till he should choose to leave Singapore. As he lay awake in his room that night, he fancied that he might feel inclined to stay a considerable time.

CHAPTER IX.

BAJAK RAJAH.

THERE was a ball at the Government-house, and Claude Peyton, Esquire, was among the invited guests. It was a brilliant affair. The rooms were of the largest size, brightly lighted, and full of people. Starched Englishmen in solemn black, with the stiffest of *white chokers*; Malay rajahs in jacket and sarong, glittering with gold and jewels, kriss in sash; Dutch burghers of the old settlements, fat and beer-loving; opulent Chinese merchants in silk robes and long pig-tails; military and naval officers, all gold lace and clattering swords; beautiful ladies, swimming about in clouds of silk and tulle; all these various sights saluted our hero's eyes as he entered the room, accompanying old Mr. Earle and his daughter.

The beautiful Julia looked splendid. As was her custom, she was attired in white; her curls crowned with camellias. Her dress was ornamented in a very curious and brilliant manner, by inclosing about a hundred fire-flies in the transparent gauze of the skirts and corsage, which glittered and flashed in different points of view, attracting universal attention to their wearer.

As Claude Peyton passed his arm around the waist of the beautiful girl, in the first waltz, he felt a thrill of triumph. He could see plainly enough that there were fifty fellows in the room who envied him. The lady could also feel that there were hundreds of girls who were sneering at her. But, as envy in a ball-room is only another sort of flattery, neither of them felt much grieved about the remarks passing about them.

As it is against etiquette to dance with the same lady more than once, Claude Peyton relinquished his partner at the end of the waltz, and was soon deep in the mysteries of the "Lancers" with another lady. This was a pretty little widow, with immense conversational powers, and she kept our hero hard at work answering her animated chatter.

In the buzz of conversation that floated around in the pauses of the dance, Peyton was struck by the frequent repetition of the name of some Malay potentate, which was on everybody's lips. He had never heard it before, and it puzzled him.

"Who is this Bajak Rajah, that every one talks about?" he asked of his pretty partner.

"I don't know," she answered; "I never heard the name before to-night."

"Bajak is the Malay word for pirate," said Claude, musingly. "But who ever heard of a pirate, called a Rajah?"

"Oh! I know who you mean now," said little Mrs. Miller. "You mean that terrible monster the people call the Red Rajah. I've often heard of him. They say he bathes in human blood every morning. But I hardly believe that."

"I suppose not," said Claude, smiling; and the conversation was turned to something else.

But they could not avoid hearing the same name in everybody's mouth around them, till the widow pettishly exclaimed:

"I wish they would leave that poor man's name alone. I get tired of hearing of his wickednesses."

Claude danced vigorously till midnight, when he had the pleasure of escorting Miss Julia Earle to supper, and waiting upon her there.

After supper, he began to conclude that he had better rest awhile, for he was tired out. To that end he strolled into the card-room adjoining, where all the heavy fathers of the town were enjoying themselves hugely over their quiet rubber of whist. Here he found old Mr. Earle, red-faced and jolly as ever, in a quartette of old fogies similar to himself, discussing some recondite subject in whist, concerning returning the lead of a queen, when you were strong in trumps, etc., as he at first imagined.

As soon as the old gentleman saw him, he hailed him.

"Peyton, my boy, precious 'ot, ain't it? You know Mr. McGrowl, don't you? Yes. You've seen 'im and Blathers hoften at my 'ouse. Hi say, Briggs, you know Mr. Peyton, don't ye? Yes, of course."

Nods and grins from the old fogies. Earle pursues:

"We was just a-talkin', when you come in, of that horful villain as they call Bajak Rajah. Some calls 'im the Red Rajah, too. 'E's been at it again. 'E's been and gone and burnt one of Blathers and McGrowl's ships. Blowed if 'e 'asn't. It's perfectly 'orrid the way that chap's a-goin' on in these 'ere seas."

"And who is this Bajak Rajah?" inquired Claude. "Is he a noted man? This is the twentieth time I've heard of him."

"I should think so," growled old Blathers. "He's the king of all the pirates in the archipelago, people say. Nobody knows where he lives, or when to expect him. Before he came around here there were pirates, to be sure. These seas were never without them. But this fellow seems to have combined them into a sort of league, and does terrible mischief. Why, he's even got the best of a single man-of-war at times. There was the corvette 'Vengeance,' was blown up by him near two years ago now. An eighteen-gun corvette, she was. Since that time he's burnt and pillaged over fifty ships of all sizes, and laughs at our navy."

"But, why don't they root the fellow out?" inquired Peyton. "Surely there are enough ships-of-war in this harbor to do it."

"Much the captains care," interrupted Mr. Duncan McGrowl. "They're so interested in the China trade, and making errands to go to Calcutta, that the Red Rajah does about as he pleases. Besides, it's a hard thing to catch him. His fleet of prahus are all flyers. Nothing short of steam can catch them, and when they see a steamer they run into the shadows, and escape to the shore."

"But, don't the steamers send in boats to burn them?" asked the Virginian. "It seems to me that they might destroy these pirates after awhile. I thought that Rajah Brooke, your English friend, had nearly exterminated the pirates of the islands?"

"They're as bad as ever since he left," returned McGrowl. "This devil of a Red Rajah has stirred them up all over, till it's not safe to put out a ship for Trepang or Sago without arming her heavily."

"It seems to me," remarked the American, "that if I was a merchant here, I wouldn't stand that sort of thing long."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" asked Mr. Earle, who had been listening to the conversation, puffy and important.

By this time quite a knot of the solid men of Singapore was gathered together in the corner of the card-room, discussing the misdemeanors of the Red Rajah.

"Yes, sir," observed Mr. Peter Briggs to a brother merchant. "It's a hactual fact. Thirty thousand pounds 'as our 'ouse lost by that thunderin' blackguard. Three ships hand a brig, all well loaded, and not a penny saved, nor a man left alive."

Another old gentleman had a story of a fleet of Chinese war-junks dispersed and captured by the terrible Rajah. The leading mandarins had been held to ransom, and the city of Canton had to pay an immense sum of hard silver dollars to get them back. So the stories went on, each increasing in atrocity. The Red Rajah's reputation appeared to have extended far and wide; for his fleet seemed to be ubiquitous. One time he would be heard of cruising in the neighborhood of Japan, or intercepting the English clippers running for Shanghai, with their bags of silver dollars to buy tea. The next he would make his appearance, carrying terror among the Calcutta Indiamen, or intercepting the outward bound vessels off Madras. And wherever he was seen, it was always the same story. His prahus appeared to defy pursuit. They were the swiftest craft afloat on the seas. Even steamers had been left behind him when the wind was fair.

The secret of their speed was a mystery. The common Malay prahus were by no means so swift. But these vessels appeared to be built on some peculiar model, unknown to the natives in general; for no clipper had been able to catch them, or escape from them.

Peyton listened to all these wonderful stories with some impatience. At last he said:

"Gentlemen, I see what is wanting here. It is only a little unity and courage. If there were enough American merchants here, this Red Rajah of yours would not have scourged the seas so long as he has. The government doesn't seem to care to protect you. Why don't you protect yourselves, then? There are plenty of men in this room, who, if they were to combine together, and fit out a good steamer, could soon drive this pirate from the seas he has tyrannized over so long. Why don't you do it? You are making immense profits in your trade here, and might be merchant-princes in a few years. But this audacious pirate threatens to rob you of all you have. Well, then, combine together. Buy or charter a swift vessel; arm her with cannon, ay, and mitrailleurs, too. There are three of them in this very harbor. I'll engage to clear out every pirate from these seas in six weeks, if you'll give me such a vessel, and ask nothing for my service."

When the fiery young man had finished, there was a silence. Wise old fogies looked solemnly at each other, and wagged their heads. The idea was too bold to take up its abode in the British brain all at once.

At last old Blathers grunted out:

"God bless my soul, young man! Do you know what you're talking about? Why, the government wouldn't allow us to put to sea."

"The government need not know any thing about it," said Peyton, quietly. "You've a right to fit out a vessel to protect your property on sea, just as much as to have watchmen on land. She may be called a trader, an opium clipper, any thing, so long as she has the men and arms on board. Take your time, gentlemen. Call a meeting of your merchants tomorrow, if you like, and discuss the subject. That's all I have to say."

And he returned to the ball-room, to dance till daylight.

The fruit of the young man's audacious proposition took about forty-eight hours to fructify.

On the third day, at evening, Mr. Earle came home from Singapore, and found Claude in the parlor, busily engaged in conversation with the lovely Julia.

"It's all right, my boy!" burst out the old gentleman, puffing, as he wiped his streaming face. "They've 'ad the meeting, and they've voted a thousand pounds apiece to fit out the vessel. She's a-going to be got ready at once, and they're hofferin' you the command."

Julia Earle looked disappointed, as Claude jumped to his feet with a loud hurrah.

"You seem to be very glad to get away from this dull place," she said, pettishly.

"Not a bit of it," he answered. "But what is life without excitement? I'll bring you back the Red Rajah's head, and Singapore shall sleep tranquil."

In a few days Claude Peyton made all his preparations. The governor had been visited by a deputation of the principal merchants of the place, and readily granted the requisite authority to cruise against the pirates.

The new and teak-built clipper-brig "Arrow," of five hundred tons, fitted with a small auxiliary screw, and hitherto an opium smuggler, was bought of her owners.

Peyton superintended the armament which consisted of only three guns. But one of these was a fifty-pound rifle and the other two were the dreaded Gatling guns. All three had been sent out as a speculation to sell to the Dutch authorities of Java. The cautious mynheers had declined to purchase them, and they had lain in the warehouse of Earle, Hoskins & Co., as unsaleable.

But now they appeared destined to take an important part in the expedition on foot. Peyton had seen the Gatling guns tried at Washington, and knew what tremendous weapons they were in the hands of brave men. He felt no doubt of his ability to fight any fleet of pirates that the Red Rajah could bring against him.

Fully armed and equipped, with a crew composed of twenty different nationalities, from the cool, steady American, down to the quiet, impassive Malay, he sailed out of the harbor of Singapore, in the swift brig, new-named, in honor of her mission, the "Avenger."

We must leave him embarked on his mission, to return to

our much-neglected little heroine, and tell the world what has become, in all this time, of Marguerite de Favannes.

CHAPTER X.

THE HAPPY ISLAND.

A YOUNG girl of extraordinary beauty was reclining upon a gorgeous couch made of ebony and mother-of-pearl, and covered with China brocade. The couch was set in the midst of a large Persian carpet, as soft as velvet, and three inches thick. It lay in the center of a sort of pavilion or summer-house, framed of bamboo, covered with gilding, and hung with silk curtains.

Outside the pavilion, nature and art had vied to make the surroundings beautiful. Such luxuriance of trees, fruit, flowers, and brightly-feathered birds, was never seen outside of the tropics. We are in an island where winter comes not; where the sun of the equator makes summer all the year round. The cocoa blooms perpetually there, and the king paradise-bird flits among the branches of the spice-trees.

But the eye of the observer would soon leave the surroundings, beautiful as they were, to rest upon the perfect beauty of the girl in the pavilion.

Slight in figure was the girl, and graceful as an antelope. The great dark eyes, that looked at you so innocently, were as beautiful as any gazelle's. Her hair, which was plaited in two long braids, was of such extraordinary length as to touch the ground when she walked. Her face was pale, but perfect in every feature as that of the Venus of Canova, with a heavenly purity of expression such as statue never knew.

Such a girl might have been suddenly dropped by the fairies to gladden the earth. She seemed too beautiful and innocent for the world.

She was magnificently dressed, in a gorgeous Oriental fashion; in cloth of gold sown with seed pearls; and the marvelous cambric of India, which the natives style "woven air," from its transparency and fineness, half veiled the snowy bosom.

A dark slave girl, richly dressed, was fanning her with a large screen of paradise-birds' feathers, and her mistress was gazing through the parted curtains of the pavilion upon the moonlit sea, lost in reverie.

Her eyes were fixed upon the long, tapering yards, and low, dark hulls of a little fleet of prahus, that lay at anchor in a small bay, surrounded by white beach.

Several islands, their shores clothed with palm and banana, down to the water's edge, were to be seen, dotting the sea outside. The island appeared to be in the center of a tropical Archipelago.

Presently the lovely girl spoke. Her voice was very low and soft, like the cooing of a ring dove. She spoke in the Malay tongue, a marvelously melodious language from her lips.

"Tell me, Sandala, what are they doing in the fleet? Does the Rajah put forth to-day?"

"The Rajah had some news this morning, lady. Kakoo came in under all sail; and ever since there has been a bustle of getting ready. May it please your resplendency, I see the great Rajah himself coming toward the pavilion, and it seems that he is coming to speak to you."

The young lady half raised herself on her arm to look round. The curtains of the pavilion were looped up all round so as to admit the air, and the lower part of a man could be seen, approaching slowly.

"It is he," murmured the girl, and a pleased smile lighted up her features. She sat up on the couch and dropped her little feet over the side on the soft carpet. They were very little feet, no longer than a child's, and quite bare. The elegance and refinement around had failed to accomplish shoes and stockings. But no one who saw those little white, blue-veined feet resting there could have carped at the absence of either. Rather would they have gone down on their knees to kiss those perfect feet, so slender and high-arched.

The girl stood up and tripped forward, just as the curtains at the entrance were parted. The lofty plumes of a warrior's bright helmet were stooped under the hanging silk, and the next moment the tall, graceful form of the Red Rajah stood beside Marguerite de Favannes.

Yes. It was our little Marguerite, shot up into maidenhood in those two short years under the equator. A white

lily grown up among pools of blood; an angel from heaven among wild, human devils she seemed.

Pure and holy she was still, among those pirates. Those innocent dark eyes could never have looked out with such a guileless freedom, had any stain been on their owner's soul. There she stood beside the pirate chief, her little head just reaching as high as his heart, and he looking down upon her, with a sort of protecting and yearning fondness, inexpressibly loving.

The Red Rajah was handsomer than ever. He was clad in a species of chain armor, with undergarments of scarlet and gold, and glittered all over with costly jewels. His personal adornments were worth millions of dollars, so large and splendid were the jewels they bore.

Marguerite greeted him with all the freedom of a child with a favorite uncle or cousin, and in French.

"And where have you been all the morning, monsieur? I have not seen you since you bid me good-night last night, and I am bored to death with the tiresome time I have all alone."

"I fear you will have to stay alone for a little while yet, Marguerite," replied the Rajah, with a grave smile; "I have to leave you this afternoon and depart, to be gone for some days, perhaps weeks."

"Oh! what shall I do, all alone?" exclaimed Marguerite, with a pretty little pout; "must I stay in all the time?"

"Not now," he answered; "I shall leave ample force to guard all the islands around here, and you can go out whenever you wish."

"But what can I do when you are away?" she asked, with the charming *moue* of a bewilderingly pretty, spoilt child; "I want you to stay to keep me company. I don't want you to go away and leave me. You *must* stay. There."

"I wish I could, little humming-bird," said the stately warrior, looking down tenderly; "I wish I could stay here forever with you. But I have enemies, Marguerite—enemies as many as powerful, and I must be off to chastise them before they become too dangerous."

"But why can not you make peace with them?" asked Marguerite, innocently. Child-woman as she was, she had no idea that the Rajah was a pirate. To her he was only a sort of sea Bedouin, a warlike sea-king who had many quarrels with his neighbors. She saw herself surrounded with luxuries which were delightful. She did not know of the ruthless plunder and bloodshed by which they were obtained. The Red Rajah took care not to let her know him as any thing but a prince.

"Why can not you make peace with them?" she asked.

"They will have no peace," he answered, "unless they can gain leave to burn down all our village here, and to shoot me and all my people. They have sent out fleets of junks and prahus, and several men-of-war of the English and Dutch, but they have never yet found me. Nor shall they yet. As soon as I hear that they propose to attack me, I attack them. And now I hear from Singapore, through one of my agents there, that certain of the merchants have resolved to sweep the Red Rajah from the seas. I go to show them their mistake."

"But why should they wish to harm you?" persisted Marguerite. "Did you ever harm them?"

The Rajah blushed for a moment—actually blushed at the home-thrust of the innocent child.

"Perhaps they think so," he answered, at last. "My fathers, before me, were rajahs of the sea, and claimed toll and tribute from all who sailed therein. If these Europeans would pay their toll cheerfully, I would not harm them; but they must needs fight; and if they get the worst of it it is no fault of mine. But come, Marguerite. It is time I was going now. When I am away, remember that every thing on this island is yours. Your favorite horse, Mahlam, is ready for your use, with your dogs and falcons, if you wish to hunt. I leave behind me a swift prahu, under Kakoo, which will take you where you please among the islands. Keep up a good heart till I return, when I will tell you all about the brave fellows who came out to sweep the Red Rajah from the seas, and how they did it."

As he spoke he bent his lofty head to brush the pure-white forehead with his long mustache.

Marguerite put her white arms around his neck, as frankly as a child, but without exhibiting very much sorrow.

"Good-by," she said, brightly. "Be back soon. It will be very *triste* here when you are away."

"Good-by, Marguerite," he returned, holding her off for a few moments to look at her with great tenderness.

The girl returned the look with a smile. Then the Rajah drew her to him once more, kissed her forehead twice, and

so left the tent abruptly. As he went, he heaved a deep sigh, and as he walked down to the boat, his head, usually so erect and proud, was sunk upon his breast in meditation.

Arrived at the little port, however, he flung off his reverie at once, and entered into the business before him with his whole heart.

The pirate fleet was full of men, and bustle and hurry was the order of the day. Water bamboos were being hoisted aboard, provisions being packed, guns burnished, muskets, rifles and pistols polished bright. Half-naked Dyaks were sharpening lance-heads and war-axes; stately Malays poisoning their deadly krisses. When the Rajah appeared, a very few minutes sufficed to complete all the preparations for sea. Malay prahus, and especially those of the pirates, are got ready at short notice.

Inside of ten minutes the huge matsails were hoisted, and swelling in the afternoon breeze. With a velocity that seemed incredible, in so light a wind, one after the other, the pirate prahus skimmed over the faintly-heaving sea, and ran off, wing-and-wing, like a flock of sea-gulls.

Marguerite had inserted her little feet in a pair of velvet slippers, to walk abroad, by this time. She stood on the green slope that led down from the pavilion to the beach, watching the sea-rovers' departure. What a pretty sight she thought it; and how much prettier the sight of herself standing watching!

She stood there, watching the rapid gliding of the brown lateen sails, as the little fleet stood off in single file, the large prahu of the Red Rajah at the head, with the scarlet flag fluttering at its peak. At last the intervening islands shut out the view, as one after another of the swift vessels rounded it, and disappeared.

Then Marguerite walked slowly back to her pavilion, thinking within herself what she should do to amuse herself. She was surrounded by obsequious slaves, all ready to do her bidding, and vie with each other to please her.

Sandala first suggested a ride, and her mistress was graciously pleased to assent. So the horses were brought up, slight-limbed, graceful creatures, with gorgeous saddles and trappings from Japan.

The beautiful Marguerite had learned to ride as well as a man, and in the same style. The loose trousers of her dress were, indeed, well adapted for such a mode of exercise.

Light as a feather, she sprung into her seat, and calling for her favorite falcon, galloped away to the interior of the island, followed by half a dozen of her attendants.

Marguerite was passionately fond of riding and falconry.

The island on which she was, the central stronghold of the Red Rajah, was just the size for a convenient ride, measuring about twelve miles across. It was diversified with lofty rounded hills, and deep valleys, full of small game; and on the north side it ended in a marsh, which was full of waterfowl.

Here Marguerite was fond of hawking, and toward it she directed her charger's steps, anticipating sport. Nor was she disappointed. She was able to fly her little falcon successfully at several teal and small ducks, and enjoyed beautiful sport. There is something so peculiarly fascinating in the institution of falconry, that there is no wonder that our heroine was detained watching her falcon till very near sunset.

At last, after a tough battle in the clouds between the plucky little falcon and a duck twice his size, ending in the death of the latter, struck through the brain by the sharp talons of "Fire-eyes," the young lady turned her horse, and rode home, leaving her falconer to hood the little servant of her pleasure.

When she had climbed the hill, behind which her present home lay, she involuntarily drew the bridle to look behind her at the sea.

A broad path of gold lay across it, skirting the line of shore, and tipping every wave with fiery sparkles. Marguerite started, as she looked. About three miles from the island was a large brig, threading her way among the islets, whose cloud of snowy canvas appeared to be too large for the dark hull beneath. The stranger was coming as straight on as could be, apparently without any notion of danger.

Marguerite was astounded. She had not seen a vessel belonging to any civilized power ever since she had been on the island. Nothing but the piratical prahus, with their outlandish rig, had met her eyes.

At once it crossed her mind that they must be the Rajah's

enemies come after him. What else could a vessel be doing there among those islands, where every stone concealed an enemy at ordinary times?

But the stranger appeared to have no fears, for he held on his course unflinchingly, till he had rounded a mountainous island, about a mile further on, when the wood-covered eminence concealed his sails from her view.

Marguerite sat on her horse, looking at the spot where the brig had vanished, till she was recalled to herself by her attendants riding up with the falcon. They had not seen the strange vessel, and she forbore to say any thing about it. She knew that in a very few hours the whole piratical population of the islands would be roused to attack the intruder, if seen by any of them. She did not wish to be accessory to the attack, herself. So she turned her horse and galloped back to the port, where lay the swift prahu under Kakoo's orders. She found every thing quiet. Nothing had been seen by any one there, and the shades of night were closing in. Marguerite retired to rest, full of conflicting thoughts. She had been perfectly happy while on the island, treated like a queen, and yet she felt now as if she wanted to escape—a certain longing to be free, to see civilization once more, took hold of her, and with them the remembrance of the handsome Monsieur Claude, who "used to be so kind to her when she was a child," she said to herself.

When she was a child! Why she was so still, in all but age and physical development. And the sight of the strange brig in a moment undid all the work of the Red Rajah, who had been slowly winning her heart to himself, with unexampled delicacy and kindness. The child forgot every thing in a moment, but her old friend Claude, and she felt certain that he was in that vessel coming to rescue her. "He could do any thing," thought Marguerite.

CHAPTER XI.

STEALING A PRINCESS.

MARGUERITE had let her book drop on her lap, and was gazing dreamily out into the night. She was all alone. Presently she began to talk to herself.

"It must have been him," she murmured; "who else would come here among these wild people? Oh! my God! take care of Monsieur Claude, and bring him here quick to me. He was so kind to poor Marguerite long, long ago, when the savages killed poor, poor papa. Oh! Mon Dieu! send him to me quickly, for I want to go away. And yet the Rajah has been very kind to me. Why should I wish to leave him? Yes. But Monsieur Claude was papa's friend, and I did love him so. He was so kind to Marguerite!"

"Marguerite!"

The word came like an echo to her speech. For a moment she thought it was. She laughed.

"What a funny echo! How did I never hear it before?"

Then she paused and listened.

Again came the voice, soft and low.

"Marguerite."

The girl sprung up erect in a moment, her eyes dilated, her head on one side to catch the sound. She stood the picture of intense attention.

"Marguerite!"

A third time came the voice.

There was no more doubt now. The child-woman threw up her eyes to heaven with delight, clasped her hands and faltered out:

"Oh! Grand Dieu! C'est lui!"*

Claude himself pushed aside the curtains and entered the pavilion, and the next instant the lost Marguerite was found again—found and weeping on his bosom.

"Oh, Monsieur Claude!" she was saying; "I knew you would come. I knew you would come at last. Oh! I am so glad. And you have come to take me to my aunt Eulalie, at Pondicherry—have you not? Oh! Monsieur Claude! was it not horrid of the wicked savages to kill poor papa? And our poor old Marie has died since; soon after we came here. She was buried close by. And the Rajah has been so kind to me, since he rescued me from those wicked savages. He has made me the princess over all these islands when he is away, and my own papa could not have been kinder. And

* It is he.

yet, do you know, Monsieur Claude, he will not tell me his name. I call him Rajah, and he tells me, if I want another name, to call him Sidah Sapuloh. But that only means 'ten tongues,' you know. Oh! Monsieur Claude! I've learned ever so much since you used to teach me in the poor old Philomele."

Thus the glad child ran on, delighted to see her old friend once more. Claude, for his part, was in a whirl of wonder and admiration. Marguerite was grown so beautiful, so winning, so immensely changed from the quiet, slender child she had been when he saw her last. Slender and small she was still, but so beautifully rounded, with a shape that a sculptor might have modeled for Titania. The rough wanderer felt a strange rising at his heart, when he found this lovely little being nestling so confidently in his arms.

She was so pretty and so innocent, a woman in appearance, an innocent child in her manner. Presently she began to ask him how he came to find her out, and where he got his vessel. Then he learned for the first time that she had seen him from the top of the hill, and that hers had been the form of the distant horsewoman he had seen.

He told her in a few words that he had been cruising in the neighborhood in search of pirates, and had come there by accident.

"Pirates!" she exclaimed; "but there are no pirates here. My lord, the Red Rajah, rules over all these islands, and he is no pirate. He has many enemies, he tells me."

"He has," said Peyton, dryly; "but did it never strike you that a man whose hand is against every man, might have every man's hand against him; and so be a pirate?"

"I don't know," said Marguerite; "but if he is a pirate, he has been as kind to me as an honest man, and never gave me cause to regret being in his power."

"Tell me, Marguerite, who is this Red Rajah, that I have heard of so often as the scourge of the Archipelago? You have known him. Who is he?" asked Claude, with interest.

"I know no more than you," she answered; "sometimes he tells me he is a Turk, an Egyptian, an Armenian, who has studied in Paris. He talks French as well as I do. But I end in saying that I can not tell, for every day he appears different. He may be a Jew, perhaps. Papa told me they go everywhere."

"Whoever he is, you have saved his life," answered Claude; "but you must not stay another hour in his power. Where is he now?"

"He went away to the south, with all his fleet, this very day," she answered; "news came from Singapore that his enemies were afoot, and the Rajah sailed to pursue them."

"It was me he was after," said the Virginian, laughing. "Well, if he catches me to the south, it will be funny. Now, Marguerite, will you go with me?"

"Surely I will," said the girl; "but why go now? I have power over all this island. Every one here obeys my will. To-morrow morning we will sail away quietly from here, and leave word for my lord, the Rajah, that we are gone. Then he can not say that his Marguerite deceived him."

"But the people here will not let you depart, foolish child," said Claude, impatiently. "You are deceived in them. As long as you do not try to leave, they will obey you, but they will not let you go. I tell you, child, they are pirates. This mysterious Red Rajah, whom no one knows, is the chief of all the pirates of the Archipelago. If you wait till morning, there will be blood shed."

But the girl would not be persuaded. Every soul on the island had bowed before her, and why should they now disobey her? Claude was reluctantly forced to yield to her arguments, and return to his vessel. He reached the boat waiting for him, without molestation, and was rowed off to the brig, where he turned in, sulkily enough.

The brig's masts were quite invisible from the shore, being hidden behind a rocky islet. In the morning Claude was hidden among the trees on the summit of the islet, watching the shore and the village. He saw a few women come out of the houses first, and then the children began to toddle about.

At last the crew of the prahu were seen to stir, and Claude perceived that there were not more than twenty able-bodied men in prahu and village.

He waited impatiently for some signs of Marguerite's presence. He had resolved that he would carry her off at any risk, and began to doubt very seriously whether he ought not to bombard the village at once.

But just as his patience was giving way, he saw the well-known figure, glittering and bright with jewels, tripping out of the gilded pavilion.

Behind the pavilion, and higher up the hill, were the lofty towers of the Rajah's palace, hidden among clustering thickets of roses. He saw the girl go toward this fairy-like structure, which he now noticed for the first time.

The light, tough bamboo had been utilized here to the last extent of which it was capable, to make a lofty palace as light as a dream.

Tall minarets, airy galleries, cool piazzas, and broad, spacious halls, were hidden away among the trees and flowers, so that you failed to see them at first. When they were noticed, the effect was wonderfully airy and picturesque.

Peyton saw the island princess going toward this palace. She was soon surrounded by crowds of slaves, to whom she appeared to be giving orders. After this, she turned round, and descended to the little village.

Claude could see the women and children salaaming, as she passed. The child had not deceived him. She seemed to be the queen of the pirates, for they bowed before her. She came to the jetty, and all the men of the prahu prostrated themselves before her.

She appeared to be giving them some orders, for they began to bustle about, and get the vessel's sails out of the clumsy gaskets they were secured with. Pretty soon down came a procession of servants from the palace, each loaded with a bundle, with which they went on board.

Peyton watched the proceedings with wonder, along with Mr. Rose, mate of the brig.

"What the deuce is the little thing about?" ejaculated Rose. "Eh, by Jove, captain! She's going to put to sea in that queer-looking craft, there, I verily believe. And if she does, we shall never catch her."

Peyton did not answer for a moment. He was thinking of what could the girl be doing. At last he slapped his knee with a loud exclamation.

"I have it!" he cried. "Rose, did you ever read Shakspeare?"

"I should rather think so."

"Do you remember when Jessica runs away with Lorenzo, what she does besides?"

"Takes all old Shylock's money, to be sure. And serve him right, too, the old hunk."

"That's it, Rose. But I tell you what, I'm getting nervous about this business. Those Malay devils will never let her take them off in that prahu. How she has fooled them so far is more than I can tell."

"Well, captain," said Rose, quietly; "all you have to do is to move out, and support her, with the long-boat. I'll get up steam, and follow her in a jiffy."

"A good idea, Rose," said the Virginian, delighted. "We'll put it into execution at once."

The long-boat still lay alongside, and the wild-looking Malay crew leaped into it in a moment.

Peyton thought to himself, as he surveyed them, that it might be hard to tell which side looked most piratical.

He pulled to the edge of the island, around whose corner he watched carefully for some minutes. The last of the train of servants had just deposited his bundle in the prahu, and was returning up the hill. The slight, glittering figure of Marguerite was standing on the pier-head, directing everything.

When everybody's attention was busily engrossed with his work, the long-boat suddenly shot out from the shelter of the island, and pulled toward the prahu.

They had crossed about half the distance, when a loud yell from the Malay pirates warned them that they were discovered. The rowers pulled as hard as they could, and were already near the pirates when the latter scattered in all directions, and dived into the hold.

In a moment more they came pouring up, gun in hand, and opened a scattering fire on the boat.

Peyton was kneeling in the bow beside his murderous mitrailleuse, when the first bullets began to whiz. He saw Marguerite run away into the village before he returned a shot.

Then, taking his station at about a hundred yards from the prahu, he ordered his men to stop rowing. Training his gun to sweep the pirate's deck, he commenced to turn the crank.

No one who has not seen the American mitrailleuse at work can form an idea of the horrible effects of its fire.

An incessant stream of fire and smoke, with a rattling repetition of cracks, as if a regiment were file-firing, burst from the strange-looking machine. A hail of bullets, like a storm, came driving over the pirate's deck, clearing it of foes in a moment. It seemed but an instant before they were yelling

and shooting. Now they had disappeared, struck down in an instant by the leaden rain, mechanically and pitilessly accurate.

With a yell of triumph the Malays resumed their oars, and dashed forward, boarding the prahu in short order.

When they reached her deck it was untenanted, save by shattered corpses and mutilated men, writhing and groaning. Claude leaped aboard, and then calling on his men to follow, dashed on to the pier, and ran up the street of the village, now all alive with fleeing women and children.

"Marguerite!" he shouted. "Marguerite!"

A light figure came running from between the houses, and he clasped her in his arms.

"Oh! how frightened I am!" she exclaimed. "Why did you do this? I told you not to."

"Never mind now," he answered; "we have no time to lose, for every inmate of these accursed islands will be up and after us, before three hours are over. Come."

He hurried her on board the prahu, which had been so unceremoniously cleared, and placed her in the cabin.

"Stay there till I tell you all's safe," he said, hurriedly, and went outside. He found his boat's crew employed in true Malay fashion, reckless of life. They were pitching overboard the wounded as well as dead pirates. So many of the Malays had suffered in former times from the cruelty of the Red Rajah and his men that Peyton was hardly surprised at their vindictiveness. But they had no time to lose. He knew that his enemies were many and cruel. The Avenger had got in her anchor, and was steaming slowly up and down outside.

Claude had resolved to carry off the prahu with him, and make for Singapore.

At sunset, the same evening, the dark lateen sails of the foremost of a line of prahus hove in sight. It was the Red Rajah, returning from his fruitless search. The first object he saw was the smoke of his own burning palace.

CHAPTER XII.

DON GREGORIO RODRIQUEZ.

JOHN EARLE, Esquire, head of the Singapore branch of the house of Earle, Hoskins & Co., sat in his counting-room on a Monday morning. The counting-room was a long, dark apartment, situated in the basement-story of the immense warehouses of the firm.

Being partly underground, and surrounded by very thick walls, this room was quite delightful in its coolness. What in our climate would have been a gloomy dungeon, under the equator, or nearly so, became a pleasant retreat.

Mr. Earle sat in a huge cane rocker, an importation from the San Francisco branch of the house (under Rufus B. Hoskins' superintendence.)

He was examining an enormous ledger, which lay on his knees, and whose pages appeared to interest him far more than the last new novel would have pleased his daughter.

"E. H. & Co., Bankers, Brokers, and Merchants," was written or printed on the back of a row of books, that showed their gilded titles in goodly numbers, from the shelves of the open safe that stood before Mr. Earle.

"H'm!" muttered the old gentleman, as he turned over the leaves; "it ain't so very bad for a year's business. Them blarsted Chinese may kick up all the bobbery they please about hopium, but it's a money-making trade. 'Ow I would like to do the 'ole of it. H'm! Hindigo. Thirty-five cargoes. That ain't bad for a single 'ouse. But then one can't make sich money at that as they used to. More's the pity. 'Backer. That's the boy for me! 'Ow many 'undredweight 'ave I sold of that 'ere stuff in hold Hingland. They may call it cabbage, as much as they please, but I notices they smokes the 'real Manilla cheroots,' hall over Hindia. And wot's more, we're the lads as sells 'em. What's this 'ere? Caballero, Rodriquez & Co.'s account. That's pretty 'eavy. But then we makes so much out of them, that we can afford to pay it. Cheroots cost us about a 'a'penny, and we sells 'em in Calcutta for fippence, Bombay sixpence, and a shillin' in Lunnon. Wish I did about ten million a year in tobacker, instead of a few 'undred thousands. 'Ello! Wot's the matter, 'Ardy?"

This query was addressed to his book-keeper, Mr. Hardy, who entered from the outer store, bearing a small card.

"A Spanish gentleman wants to see you, sir."

Mr. Earle inspected the card very carefully through his glasses. It was a very tiny card, and the name was engraved in such a fine Italian hand as to be almost invisible. Mr. Earle puzzled over it in vain, till his clerk, with younger eyes, came to his help.

"Why the doose can't the blasted foreigner 'ave his name printed plain?" grumbled the merchant. "Well, 'Ardy, 'oo is it?"

"DON GREGORIO RODRIQUEZ," read out Hardy, slowly.

"Eh! God bless my soul! You don't say so?" exclaimed Mr. Earle, hurriedly jumping up to put away his ledger. "Why, 'Ardy, 'e's the 'ead of the 'ouse of Caballero, Rodriquez & Co., of Manilla. Old Caballero's dead, but they keep 'is name hup still. Show 'im in, 'Ardy—show 'im in. That feller grows more 'backer, and sugar, and 'emp, than any one I know. Show 'im in, 'Ardy, and, mind you, be horful civil. We howe 'is 'ouse a pile of money."

Hardy disappeared, and Mr. Earle bustled about the dingy office, making things straight for his respected visitor. He shut the safe, and drew up a second rocking-chair close to a large table, strewn with books, bills of lading, and loose letters.

In a few minutes more Hardy entered, ushering in a tall gentleman, whom he announced as "Don Gregorio Rodriquez."

Mr. Earle rushed forward with overpowering hospitality.

"My dear Don Gregorio, so 'appy to see you. 'Ardy, 'and a chair to Don Gregorio. A hold friend of our 'ouse, like you, is always welcome. 'Ardy, tell 'em to send in some of them hiced Yankee drinks at once. My dear Don Gregorio, 'ow 'appy I am to see you."

The tall gentleman had allowed his hand to rest in that of the merchant, quite impassively. He now spoke in a singularly soft and deep voice, with a very marked foreign accent.

"T'ank you, sare, I am afraid I s'all put you to so mosh trouble. Pray do not discommode yourself."

"No trouble at all, sir," responded the hospitable Earle. "'Urry up! 'Ardy! Be hoff."

Hardy vanished; and Mr. Earle finally got his visitor settled in one of the American rockers, near the window, where he could look at him.

Don Gregorio Rodriquez was about as strong a contrast to the plethoric, mercantile Earle, as you could imagine. He did not look the least like a merchant.

He was exceedingly tall, and rather slightly built, but as graceful in every movement as a panther. His face was strikingly handsome, although nearly as brown as an Indian's.

His eyes were dark and luminous, and his short, curling hair and drooping mustache were as black as the raven's wing.

Don Gregorio did not appear to feel the heat in the slightest. He was dressed in a full suit of closely-fitting black, the frock buttoned across. The only summery thing about the don was his broad-brimmed Panama hat, which Mr. Earle, learned in such matters, mentally pronounced to be "worth five hundred dollars, if a cent."

The Englishman's eyes were also attracted to the studs glittering in the immaculate shirt-front of the Spanish gentleman. Each of them was a solitaire diamond, as large as a pea.

"Worth ten thousand pounds apiece, I'll bet," mentally ejaculated Mr. Earle, as he gazed.

The Spanish gentleman opened the conversation, as he lay back in the cool chair, languid and handsome.

"Do you object to de smoking of one leetle cheroot en your offeece, Senor Earle?" he asked, languidly.

"Not in the least, don—not in the least," blurted out the puffy merchant. "Smoke, by all means. We know what kind of cheroots you 'ave in *your* 'ouse. Eh, don?" And Mr. Earle chuckled obsequiously.

Don Gregorio produced from his breast-pocket a small case of exquisite beauty, so thickly incrustated with jewels that old Earle could not restrain a cry of admiration.

"My! Ain't that 'andsome?"

The Spaniard smiled.

"You like it? A mere trifle, Mr. Earle. I like to have de apparatus prettee. Veel you onore me?"

And he extended the case to the old merchant, who softly extracted a small cheroot from it, as if he were afraid to injure it. Don Gregorio placed another of the cheroots beneath the long, silky mustache that drooped down below his

chin so gracefully. He replaced the case in his pocket, and arrested Mr. Earle with a gesture, as he was rising.

"Do not trouble yourself to get de matches, senor, I beg of you. I always carree de apparatus for de fire in mai po-kett."

And the impassive Spaniard drew from his pocket a tidy match-safe, made of gold, as far as you could see for the diamonds that incrustated it.

"*Peuga, senor*," he said, quietly; "ah! pardon. I forget maiself, I speak Espanol. Take eet."

And he struck a light from a little wax match and lighted his cheroot, first handing the light to the other.

Mr. Earle worshiped wealth. If Don Gregorio had ordered him to black his boots, I believe he would have done it. To be on terms of such easy familiarity with this princely-looking stranger perfectly intoxicated the old plebeian. He sat, enjoying the fragrance of the best Manilla he had ever smoked, and mentally adoring the Spaniard, till Hardy re-entered, with a boy bearing a salver of sherry-cobblers.

Don Gregorio was graciously pleased to imbibe a cobbler and smile approvingly. Then Mr. Earle opened the conversation with a nervous laugh.

"I suppose, hal hal Don Gregorio, that your visit 'ere is partly on account of the balance owing your 'ouse, eh? It's pretty 'eavy this year, I know; but, thank 'Eaven, Earle, 'Oskins & Co. ain't obliged to ask credit for their balances. 'Ow will you 'ave it?"

The fact was, that Mr. Earle was at the time a little pinched for ready money, and as the balance due Caballero, Rodriguez & Co. was for a whole year's sales, amounting to several cargoes of tobacco, he hated desperately to pay it.

Don Gregorio waved a slender hand daintily. Mr. Earle saw the sparkle of a single diamond on the little finger.

"Do not trouble yourself, senor," he said, languidly. "I do not come down on de business. I leave all dat to my *tenedor de libros*—pardon, my book-keepair. He veel make de draft, I suppose, in de usual mannair. I coom on de pleasure. I have not been out from Manilla for many years. I coom to see de great world once more; and I call first on de old house dat have do our beez-nees for so long."

Mr. Earle seized the other's hand with effusion.

"You do me honor, Don Gregorio," he said, "and I'm 'artily glad to see you. You mustn't think of stoppin' in these 'ere beastly 'otels in the town. They ain't fit to put a 'og in. You must come with me to my little place in the country, and be comfortable. 'Tain't a rich palace like *you* live in, Don Gregorio, I know; but I can promise you a 'arty welcome and a pretty fair dinner, if I *do* say it, as shouldn't."

The don smiled blandly.

"I shall be very happy, senor," he answered; "but I am not reduc-ed to de hotels for my quar-tairs. I did come in my own prahu from Manilla. She is my—vot you call yacht, I think."

"And did you really sail all the way here in a native prahu?" asked Mr. Earle, in astonishment.

"And why not, senor? I have make her under my own supair-veesion, and she is swift as de very wind."

"She need be swift to sail through the Sooloo Sea," remarked the merchant; "for that unhung villain, the Red Rajah, scours it with a fleet of flyers."

A sweet smile lifted the center of Don Gregorio's long mustache, just showing a glimpse of pearly-white teeth.

"He is some great pirate, den, dis Red Rajah," he said. "I hear some people speak of heem be-fore."

"I should think they would," returned Earle, testily. "E ought to be 'ung by the 'eels over a 'ot fire, 'e ought. The thousands of pounds as our 'ouse, and hother 'ouses in this 'ere place, 'as lost, is incredible, owin' to that werry villain. But we smoked 'im at last, 'ang 'im!"

The Spaniard blew a ring of smoke from his lips, and inquired:

"Indeed? I am so ignorant of all dis, you know. You veel pardon me for asking, how did you *smoke eem*, as you call eet?"

"All of us merchants as 'ad lost by 'im, we chartered a brig and sent 'er a-cruisin' after 'im. A young Yankee feller took the command, and we gave 'im some of them 'undred-shooters the Yankees is so proud of—them Gatling guns. 'Oskins, of our 'ouse, consigned 'em 'ere, but Lor' bless you, we couldn't sell 'em. They cooked the Rajah's goose, though, 'ang 'im!"

"And deed you hear, den, dat dis Red Rajah was keeled?" asked the Spaniard, in a tone of languid interest.

"Not exactly killed," admitted Earle; "but the Avenger found out his favorite 'aunt, burnt his 'ouse over the 'eads of the slaves as 'e left be'ind, and stole a lot of 'is treasures. And that ain't the best of it, neither. There's a 'ole squadron of men-o'-war in the 'arbor now, as is goin' to start for them hislands to-morrow, and clear hout hevery pirate of the 'ole lot."

"Dat eez ver' good news," said Don Gregorio, smiling; "what pity is it dat Senor Colorado Rajah cannot be informed of de amiable in-ten-tions of heez friends at Singapore! How he would t'ank zem!"

And the handsome Rodriguez laughed, in a low, musical tone.

"Veel you not take anoder cheroot?" he added; "dey are only made of de very best tobacco on our planta-tion. We keep de one field dat grow dem for our own private smokeeng. A light! Certainlee."

After a few moments' smoking, Don Gregorio inquired:

"And dis Red Rajah—you call heem—was anyteeng else brought away from his place? Was eet only his money dey stole?"

"No one *stole* anything, Don Gregorio," said the merchant, testily; "it's no stealing to take from a pirate, is it?"

"Pardon, senor," said the Spaniard, blandly; "I do not speak de Eengleesh very well. I meestake de word. But did dey *take* anything else but money?"

Mr. Earle chuckled and rubbed his hands.

"That's the best of it, Don Gregorio! That's the best of it! You must know that there was a little French girl on the hisland, whom the Rajah 'ad saved from a wreck, once on a time. A most romantic story she 'ad. Well, it so 'appened that our young Yankee 'ad been on the same vessel once, with the little girl. And so she knew 'im, and ran away with 'im. The Rajah must 'a' been awful fond of 'er. She was dressed like a princess, and brought away enough valuables of her hown to be worth ten thousand pounds."

"Indeed?" was all Don Gregorio said.

"And all that was 'er *hown*, as the Rajah 'ad given 'er. She wouldn't take anything else but 'er hown."

"She was a dear, good little girl," remarked the don.

"A little fool, I call 'er," said the merchant. "Wasn't 'e a robber and a pirate? She hought to 'a taken hall she could. I would."

"I do not doubt eet," said Don Gregorio, quietly.

"But the crew of the brig wasn't so doosed honest," old Earle continued. "They cleaned out heverything on the hisland they could lay their 'ands on, and then put a match to my lord's palace. They couldn't find where 'e'd 'id 'is gold, but they'll 'ave a hopportunity when the squadron sails to-morrer. If they don't 'unt up some of the gold of them hislands, it'll be because it ain't there."

The Spaniard laughed again.

"Probablee," he said. "*Porgue no sera en caso*—ah! pardon! I forgot again. Because it shall no' be in de ha-oosc. Si. Si."

Mr. Earle went on with his story.

"They've brought 'er to my 'ouse now, and she and Julia—that's my daughter, don—are as thick as pickpockets. She's a pretty child, but I must say, not 'arf as 'andsome as my Julia. You shall see 'er to-night, Don Gregorio. You'll sleep at my 'ouse, won't you?"

"With de great plee-sure," replied the Spaniard. "I weel but send word to my vessel and have my *baules*—ah! my trunks I mean—sent to your house. But, tell me, senor, shall I see dees charming leetle maiden at your ha-oosc?"

"Certain, don. I'll introduce you to her and to my Julia, too, Don Gregorio."

"*Mil Gracias*," returned the other, somewhat absently.

He smoked on silently for some minutes. Presently he inquired:

"At what hour do you drive home?"

"At two o'clock, Don Gregorio. Where shall I 'ave the pleasure of callin' for you?"

"At the dock where de yacht lies," said the Spaniard, rising. "I salute you, senor, and kiss your hands. I will be quite readee den."

In a few moments more the tall, elegant-looking Spanish millionaire was walking out through the spacious warehouse, buttoning one glove with easy negligence, and humming an air from the opera of Fra Diavolo.

Mr. Earle saw his lofty figure swing along the street toward the quay, only a hundred yards off. The long, slender, tapering yards of a prahu betokened Don Gregorio's "queer taste in yachts," as the merchant thought.

But when he came down to see her, in the afternoon, he changed his opinions. Don Gregorio's yacht was the most perfect specimen of marine luxury and beauty he had ever seen. Being formed of two similar shells or canoes, secured to each other by powerful beams, she possessed all the keen swiftness of outline of the prahu captured from the pirate chief so recently.

But, the luxury of her appointments, all blazing with gold, and the fact of her having white sails of the finest duck, sufficiently marked the difference between the pirate's craft and the millionaire's yacht. The crew were attired in Malay fashion, but in dark-blue China silk, and the name BONITA was worked in gold across the breasts of their shirts. The captured pirate's prahu, black and dingy looking, lay not far off—a strange contrast to the "Bonita."

Beyond her again was the Avenger, lying close under the guns of several frigates and steamers, whose "blue-peters," flying at the fore, announced them to be ready for sea. It was the squadron to chase the pirates.

Don Gregorio laughed when Mr. Earle pointed it out to him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LETTER.

WHEN Don Gregorio had mounted into the buggy in which Mr. Earle was driving, the latter gave some directions to his porter, who accompanied him. The baggage of the Spanish gentleman was put on a light cart, and taken off to the merchant's house, while the buggy itself took a more circuitous route.

Mr. Earle was anxious to show the millionaire all the points of interest in and about Singapore; and it was late in the afternoon when they reached the "Palms," as Mr. Earle styled his villa.

During the ride, Don Gregorio manifested quite a lively interest in the story of the little cast-away, Marguerite de Favannes. When he heard her name, he suddenly remembered that he was well acquainted with her aunt in Pondicherry.

"I do know Madame de Choiseul very well," he said. "I have a letter from her to myself, in which she speaks of her Marguerite, 'sa niece perdue' she calls her. I will send it up to her, senor, with your kind permission, when we get to de ha-oose."

And accordingly, a letter, inclosed in one of Mr. Earle's envelopes, and addressed, in a running Italian hand, to "Mademoiselle de Favannes" was taken up to the room, where our little Marguerite was just awaking from her afternoon siesta.

The Spanish gentleman retired to his own apartment, to which he was shown by his host, to divest himself of the dust of travel.

As soon as he was left alone, he went to the open window, and sat down behind the Venetians, where he listened intently. The next room to his own, his host told him, was occupied by the distressed damsel. Presently he heard a tap at the door of that room, and a sweet voice from within inquired;

"*Qu'est ce que c'est?*" (What is it?)

Then there was the opening of a door, and the voice of the little Malay page:

"A letter for misses."

"*Merci*," he heard, and then the door closed.

"She has it," muttered Don Gregorio, in English, without a trace of the accent he had assumed before.

Then he rose, and walked noisily about the room, as if to let every one know he was there, and finally sat down to unpack his trunk.

Marguerite, in the next room, with the letter in her hand, was only half awake. She heard the noise, and knew that a stranger was there, but had not opened her letter yet. Suddenly she heard a mellow baritone voice, remarkably sweet in its tones, singing an air that she well knew.

It was the Girondin hymn. "*Mourier pour la patrie*."

Marguerite started when she heard that voice. She knew it well. In an instant she was awake, and began tearing open the letter in her hand.

It ran thus:

"MARGUERITE—You have left me. I know not whether it was willingly or not. I came back to my own happy island, to find Marguerite gone, my people corpses, men, women, and children; my village a heap of ashes. Was this good, Marguerite? They tell me you fled with another man, willingly. Is this true? If it is, you may add one more to the list of ingratitude. You can slay me. I am here. You have but to recognize me, point me out, and hundreds of hands will be raised against the Red Rajah, who has defied them so long. I am come to seek you. I put my life in your hands. If you have any love left for me, pretend not to know me when you see me. I am here in the character of Don Gregorio Rodriguez, a rich planter of Manilla, who knows your aunt Eulalie at Pondicherry. Now, farewell. Be discreet, and all may yet be well. SIDAH SAPULOH."

When Marguerite had finished reading this letter, she trembled violently.

He was there, the man whom she regarded with such a strange mixture of feelings, now. Was she glad or afraid? She hardly knew which was the uppermost emotion. She knew, by this time, what he was called in Singapore. She knew that the gorgeous Rajah, whom she knew on the island, was an execrated pirate here. She sat trembling, for fear he might be found out, and wondering how she should meet him.

And she knew that he was in the next room, too, for did she not hear his voice?

Marguerite sat hesitating and trembling, till the clang of the bell, down below, gave token that it was time to dress for dinner. She hurried through with her toilet, and while still engaged in it, heard the door of the next room opened, and the light step of the stranger going past, down the stairs.

Poor Marguerite had not been happy since she left the island. The ruthless destruction she had seen perpetrated by the crew of the Avenger equaled the atrocities of the pirates themselves.

Marguerite, in her untutored simplicity, had imagined that she could leave the island, under the escort of Monsieur Claude, taking with her only the presents given to her by the Rajah. She thought that she could go to Pondicherry, to her aunt, and thus regain her family without offending the Rajah very much.

He would forgive her, she thought. He was so kind. Besides, he had no business to keep her from going to her aunt Eulalie.

But when she found herself as powerless under the leadership of Monsieur Claude as under that of the Red Rajah himself, she altered her mind, and began to wish she had never left the island.

But we will leave her to explain her feelings herself in due time. She descended to the drawing-room soon after, and found Mr. Earle there, gotten up in formal black, and talking to a tall gentleman, whose back was turned to her.

She entered so softly as not to be heard for some moments; and so had time to scan the stranger, and prepare herself for the meeting. It was he. She knew him in a moment. There was no mistaking that lofty figure, so full of haughty grace. His hair was clipped short, to be sure, and he was attired in the garments of an European fashionable; but it was he.

Now, at last, Mr. Earle turned round, and saw her.

"Ah! my dear ma'm'selle, we were just a-talkin' about you. Don Gregorio, this is Ma'm'selle Marguerite de Favannes, the romantic young lady as I told you of. Ma'm'selle, this is Don Gregorio Rodriguez, of Manilla, as 'as the pleasure of knowing your lady-aunt in Pondicherry."

Don Gregorio bowed low, with stately grace, and poor Marguerite courtesied, casting down her eyes in great confusion.

The don addressed her in French, and glided into a fluent conversation, without the slightest appearance of effort. Marguerite replied in low monosyllables, but her embarrassment was attributed to modesty, and there was no appearance of the two ever having met before.

The girl was very much relieved, however, by the appearance of Julia Earle, who sailed into the room a few minutes afterward, fluttering in waves of Swiss muslin. Julia had heard of the arrival of the foreign millionaire, and was prepared to fascinate.

The Spanish gentleman was evidently much taken with her appearance, for he entered into a very lively talk with her at once. Julia spoke very good French, and the conversation was managed so as to bring Marguerite into it very frequently.

Julia discovered such a fund of information, wit and repartee, that Don Gregorio and she were on splendid terms

when dinner was announced. Mr. Earle was fain to sit by, and pretend to understand what was said, when he hardly knew a word of French.

When dinner was announced, the don stood up to offer his arm to the magnificent Julia, when Mr. Earle interposed, timidly:

"Ain't we a-goin' to wait for Claude, my dear? 'E ought to be h'n pretty soon."

"Oh! never mind Claude," was Miss Julia's reply. "They can keep some soup hot for him, but we can't let every thing else get cold for *him*. Come, pa. Take Marguerite down."

From which dialogue several things may be inferred.

First, that Claude Peyton was intimate enough already at that house to be called by his Christian name. Second, that the fair Julia was too much engrossed with her new conquest to think of her old beau. Third, that she did not care much for Claude just at present.

All which things were partly true.

Claude was very intimate. Since he had brought Marguerite to Earle's house he had become more so than ever. When first the orphan girl arrived, Julia received her with effusion, and, as old Earle had said, the two girls became as "thick as pickpockets." But, somehow, after a week or so, the affection had cooled, and Marguerite was a great deal alone in her room. And Claude was so much occupied in fitting out the *Avenger* for sea, that he was seldom at home. When he was, he was devoted to Marguerite.

But the girl herself had begun to treat him coldly, and the state of things was rapidly becoming unpleasant at the "Palms" when Don Gregorio arrived to stir up the waters.

In a few moments more the party entered the dining-room and took their seats at table.

Claude Peyton did not make his appearance till the dinner was over, and they were enjoying their dessert.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INSULT.

THE consequence of Claude's intimacy in the house was that a laughing attack was opened upon him by every one at the table for being late, and he was so much taken up with his answers and repartees, as to forget, momentarily, the presence of a stranger.

He had heard of the don's arrival from the servants, and had admired the gorgeous prahu-yacht, that lay anchored so close to his own vessel.

Don Gregorio, in the graceful foreign fashion, mingled in the conversation without waiting for a formal introduction, and Claude, knowing all about him previously, answered gayly. And thus it happened that the whole party were soon rattling away, and Don Gregorio was still entirely unacquainted with Claude's surname.

Marguerite addressed him as "Monsieur Claude." Julia called him "Claude," and so did her father. Naturally, Don Gregorio followed the fashion of the rest, and addressed him as Senor Claudio.

Claude's arrival diffused a great deal of life over the party. His high spirits and handsome face made him welcome everywhere. He was full of excitement over the proposed expedition against the pirates. He had been on board the *Avenger* all day, seeing to her stores and ammunition, and shipping a crew of Europeans.

He felt safe to clean out every pirate in the Archipelago, and bragged not a little about it.

Julia, Mr. Earle, and Don Gregorio, were all much interested in the preparations, especially the latter. He asked numerous questions, and appeared to be very anxious for the success of the expedition.

"The scoundrels ought to be killed," he observed. "They have done more mischief than any of you know, and it is time that they were exterminated."

Marguerite de Favannes was the only silent one of the party. She could not act a part like Don Gregorio; and she was not ignorant like Claude and Julia. She sat quietly by, while the others were laughing and joking about the swift destruction that was to overtake the Red Rajah.

And Marguerite looked with mingled wonder and terror at the very man who was to be the victim of all these preparations. There he sat, serene and placid, a slight smile on his

handsome face, his dark, luminous eyes half-closed in lazy self-possession, listening to the talk, and now and then dropping an occasional sentence in his deep, melodious voice. In the very midst of his enemies, the Red Rajah of the Archipelago was as quiet and impassive as an exquisite at a play.

Mr. Earle, as we know, followed the old English custom of sitting over his wine, while the ladies went up stairs.

Julia gave the signal, soon after Claude's entrance, and she and Marguerite retired to the drawing-room. Don Gregorio held the door open for the departure, and as the fair Julia passed, she laughingly observed:

"I hope you won't let pa detain you too long, Don Gregorio. You'll find his stories insufferably long-winded."

"I will stay but a moment," returned the gentleman.

Then, as Marguerite passed, he whispered to her in French, very rapidly:

"In the garden. To-night."

The girl bowed her head, and departed with Julia.

Don Gregorio returned to the table, and took his seat.

"Now, then, gentlemen," said their host, "let's 'ave a quiet chat hover the port. Claude, my boy, 'ere's your 'ealth, and may you 'ave success in your hexpedition. Don Gregorio, 'elp yourself, and pass the bottle to Claude."

The don smiled blandly, and did as requested, and the conversation drifted into its old topic, the Red Rajah. Since the coming of Rodriguez, Mr. Earle's notions had taken a sudden change toward Claude. He began to patronize the young man, good-naturedly enough, but still with a certain air of superiority.

"The young fellow's all very well," he said to himself, "but this 'ere don is a much better match for my Julia, and I think I'll 'ave to let Claude know it. Politely, of course. If he must 'ave a wife, 'e can take the little French girl. I've a notion as 'ow 'e likes her best, any 'ow."

And so he began to give Claude some fatherly advice, as to how he should conduct his expedition. Moreover, he took occasion to make several jocular allusions to the "little ma'm'selle," rallying Claude on his fondness for her. The Virginian took it all in good part, at first, but wearisome repetition made him a little testy at last. Don Gregorio took no part in the jokes. He sat, quiet and placid to all appearance. But every time old Earle alluded to Marguerite, coupling her name with this young stranger's, his hand tightly clenched under the table.

"Will you have a cigarre?" he asked the old gentleman, at last, to stop the conversation. "You know you like my leetle cheroots, senor."

"Much obliged," said the jolly merchant. "With the greatest of pleasure. Ha! Claude, my boy, you never 'ad a cigar like this in Yankee-land, old fellow."

Claude made no answer. A Virginian hates to be called a Yankee, and he was beginning to resent Earle's tone.

Don Gregorio tendered the exquisite case to the two gentlemen, and it seemed for a while as if peace was restored in the curling smoke.

But the don himself opened the campaign presently, with a remark to Claude.

"It seems, senor, that you were very fortunate in your first expedition."

"How so?" inquired Claude.

"You did expect to have much trouble in fighting with this Red Rajah, I undairstand. But instead of bringeing back his head, as you say you go to do, you only find de leetle children and de women dere. Carambo, senor. It was well you deed not meet dat Red Rajah. I have hear dat he is terrible man to meet."

"I don't know that I should have cared much, if I had met him," returned Claude, sharply. "One good brig, with a fifty-pound rifle, and two Gatling guns on board, would have scattered him and his fleet to the four winds."

Don Gregorio smiled provokingly. He took the cheroot from between his lips, and allowed a stream of smoke to escape before he answered.

"Mi querido senorito," he said, at length, "you are quite young yet, and you have not hear of de way in which dat Red Rajah take de English corvette, Vengeance, two year ago. Eet was ver' lockee for you dat 'e deed not catch you to serve you de same way."

Claude was nettled at this speech. He did not like the term "senorito" (little senor), nor the superior smile of the don.

"It's the *Rajah's* luck that he escaped *me*," he replied. "I don't know any thing about the corvette Vengeance. She was captured by some devilish device of that infernal

cowardly cut-throat, the Red Rajah. He never took her in fair fight, I'm sure. No one but a devil, fresh from hell, could have concocted such a diabolical plot to destroy the steamer 'Alcide,' that afterward chased him. Did you hear that story, sir? The unhung villain blew up the corvette he had taken by some trick, and very nearly sunk the Alcide. Her captain is in port now, and commands the frigate 'Marengo.' He'll tell you all about your precious Red Rajah, Don Gregorio."

Rodriguez listened calmly till he had finished, smoking tranquilly all the while.

"You are excited, *senorito*," he said, provokingly. "The Red Rajah has taken scores of vessels in fair fight. Let us be just to our enemies. He has led a wild life in these seas, but de universal re-port eez dat he is a brave enemees. De Red Rajah nevair rob de poor man."

"It seems to me, Don Gregorio, that you talk as if you liked this cut-throat."

"Quien sabe?" replied Rodriguez; "I do not see for my part dat he is any worse dan de Engleesh, de Dootch, de Portuguese, ay, even my own contree-men. Dey coom here; dey rob, and murther, and steal; dey call it conquest. Vot he do more? He make de fleet, he take de sheeps, he burn, he kill. So do de mans-of-war. Eh, *senorito*?"

"I see no parallel between the cases," said Claude, hotly. "The European men-of-war only fight in time of war, after a regular declaration. You can not compare them to pirates. This fellow wars with all the world."

"Por Dios! You are right," said the don, laughing in his low, melodious tones; "and he geeve de whole world mosh trouble to put heem daoon."

Claude grew angry at the other's mocking tone. He had felt so much like a hero, that he did not like to be sneered at.

"I am glad that you sympathize with him," he said, sulkily. "You'll be sorry when you see him hung, which he will be if we catch him."

"But vy deed you not keep him when you did have him?" asked Rodriguez, laughing a little more, as the other grew angrier. "You were in his stronghold, dey tell me. You had de fine time killing de womens and de chil-dren. Why did you no stay a leetle longair to see de mastair of de haoose?"

Claude was about to answer angrily, when Mr. Earle interposed with a laugh, anxious to make peace.

"Don't ye remember the hold song, don? 'ow it says:

'Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief,
Taffy came to my 'ouse, and stole a bit o' beef,
Hi went to Taffy's 'ouse, Taffy wasn't at 'ome,
Taffy came to my 'ouse, and stole a mutton-bone.'

That's the way to do it, Don Gregorio."

The don puffed tranquilly.

"And veech of de two gentlemens act de part of Senor Taffi," he inquired. "It is an honorable part to go to a man's haoose and burn eet, and den ron away, like de tief, you say."

Claude could stand this sort of thing no longer. His temper was hot at the best of times.

"I burnt the Rajah's palace," he said, fiercely; "and I killed all the men I found, because it was the nest of accursed pirates. That's why I did it. As for the women and children, God is my witness, I tried to spare them. But I had a crew of wild Malays and Dyaks, picked up everywhere and anywhere. They were uncontrollable by me, when they had once tasted blood. It was they who committed the depredations you speak of. And yet, I don't know why I say this. It's no one's business what I did. They were a nest of pirates, and it served them all right. If I catch him, I'll serve him the same way."

"How do you mean?" asked Don Gregorio, languidly. "Do you mean you will burn his haoose, and ron away?"

"No, sir," thundered Claude, striking his fist on the table, so that the glasses rung; "I'll cut his pirate head off, and exterminate him and all his crew, so that there shall never be a Red Rajah heard of again in these seas."

Don Gregorio extracted a second cheroot from his case, and calmly lighted it. When he spoke again, he changed the language to French.

"And mademoiselle," he said, between the puffs of his cigar; "what will you do with her? I hear from a friend of mine that you stole her away against her will. My friend told me that you had acted the part of a coward to that young lady, for she loved the Red Rajah."

Mr. Earle was puzzled by the rapid French, and did not understand what was going on.

"Then your friend is a liar!" replied Claude, shortly, still in French.

Don Gregorio took his cigar from between his lips.

"I never desert my friends," he said, quietly. "You are brave on women and children, and behind the backs of brave men. My friend can not resent your words. He is too many miles away. I do it for him. Monsieur, you will give me a meeting to-morrow, or I will post you as a coward throughout Singapore."

Mr. Earle was completely mystified.

"What are you two talking about?" he inquired. "Why can't you talk English, instead of jabberin' them foreign lingoos?"

The don turned to him with a pleasant laugh.

"We were arranging a little ride into the mountains, for to-morrow morning," he said. "Is it not so, Monsieur Claude?"

"But Claude can't go a-ridin' with you to-morrow," said innocent Mr. Earle; "he's a-goin' to sail in the morning, after the pirates."

"He will put it off, I think," said the don, serenely. "Is it not so, *senor*? Your vessel will go with the mate in the command. Is it not so?"

Claude eyed the other with a peculiar look.

"I suppose it must be so," said he, gloomily.

"Let us shake hands on it, then," said the Spaniard, and he extended his hand.

Claude knew that the meeting between them must be kept secret, at the peril of his being posted as a coward. He knew that he must meet this man on the field—this man whom he had never seen before. He must resign the command of the Avenger, and peril his life to atone for the hasty word he had spoken. And yet he had been so grossly, though covertly, insulted, that he could not do otherwise than accept the challenge. There are some insults that can not be borne, and the words "liar and coward" had passed.

He held out his hand and took that of the other in a firm grasp.

"I will keep the appointment," he said, meaningly.

Don Gregorio bowed low.

"Come, Senor Earle," he remarked, "is it not time we did fineesh to drink. De ladies will expect us, and I promised the Senorita Giulia that I would come into de drawin'-room. Will you dispense with me?"

"Certainly, certainly, don," replied the puffy merchant.

He thought within himself that this Spanish chap might take a fancy to his Julia, and he was willing to let him have his chances.

A few minutes afterward Don Gregorio was entering the drawing-room.

As he put his hand on the door, he muttered:

"I have disposed of this housebreaker pretty well. Now for my pretty little runaway."

And he turned the knob of the door and went in.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GARDEN.

At eleven o'clock that night all was silent around the "Palms." The house was dark and every one had retired, according to Eastern custom.

Just at this hour, however, the green open-work door which led from the drawing-room onto the open piazza or colonnade, was slowly unclosed, and a dark figure issued therefrom. It was Don Gregorio, still in evening dress, as he had retired from the drawing-room twenty minutes before.

He had just tapped on the wall of Marguerite's room, to let her know he was going, before he stole down-stairs. Don Gregorio's footsteps were perfectly noiseless. He wore black felt slippers, which made no sound.

He stalked silently into the garden, and turned behind the first rose-thicket to wait for Marguerite. He was not deceived in her coming. Pretty soon the door opened again, and he saw a small figure, dark and unobtrusive, flitting down the walk. He stepped out, and the next minute Marguerite stood beside him. She had thrown a dark mantle over her white dress, so as to appear less conspicuous in the moonlight.

Don Gregorio said not a word; no more did she. He

drew her arm through his, and led her through the garden-walks till they came to the arbor where Claude had first seen Julia Earle. Here he gravely handed the young lady to a seat, and took his own at a short distance off, and facing her.

Then there was a long silence.

Marguerite sat with her eyes fixed on the ground, unable to speak, and trembling under the glowing eyes of her strange companion. The Rajah, on his side, literally devoured her with his eager gaze, and seemed to find it as difficult on his part to address her.

At last, however, he began, in a low tone, in French:

"It is thee, indeed, Marguerite, my little pearl, whom I cherished in my heart. And thou it was that left me. Left me all alone, to flee with a robber, a slayer of women and children."

Marguerite shivered, but made no reply.

The Red Rajah waited for some time. At last he asked her:

"Well, mademoiselle? Have you no word for the friend who saved your life once? Is it true that you left the island willingly with this boy? Had you no remembrance left of my kindness, except to avail yourself of it, by carrying off your wardrobe and jewelry that I gave you?"

Still no answer. Poor Marguerite's head had sunk on her lap, and she was weeping violently. The Rajah's words had reached her tender little heart, and she felt like a culprit before him.

He looked at her in silence, for some minutes. Then a sudden smile lighted up his dark, handsome face. He suddenly shifted his position over to where she was, took one of the little hands in his, passed his arm around her, and drew her to him softly.

"Come, Marguerite," he whispered, kindly. "Tell me all about it."

The relief was instantaneous. The soft-hearted child burst out crying on his breast, and told her simple little story between her sobs, just as a child might.

"Oh, my lord!" she murmured. "Truly, truly, I never meant to do as I have done. But I saw a ship outside the island, when I was out hawking. And it set me to thinking of poor, poor papa, you know. And then I remembered Monsieur Claude, poor Monsieur Claude, whom the savages carried off, you know. I told you all about it before. And I couldn't help thinking of poor aunt Eulalie in Pondicherry, who must think me to be dead. And then, somehow, it struck me that Monsieur Claude might have got away from the savages, and might be in the ship. I cannot tell how it was that I thought so, but I couldn't help it. And then I went home and waited. And, sure enough, Monsieur Claude did come in that very night, all alone. How he got through the village I cannot tell, but he came to my pavilion in the middle of the night. I was dreadfully frightened at first, but when I found who it was, I was so glad, for I fancied he had brought me news from my aunt Eulalie. And, you know, my lord, you promised to take me to her, and you never did. So I was the least bit angry with you, and he promised so nicely to take me to my aunt Eulalie that I consented to go at last. But I meant to leave a letter for you, to tell you where I had gone; indeed, I did. And Monsieur Claude, he kept promising to do it, and to take me to my aunt's. But, oh! my lord! how he deceived me! When I packed up my things next morning, I meant to sail in the prahu you left me, and to send it back with news to you where I was. I thought you deserved a little fright, you know, for not keeping your promise. You're not angry, are you?"

The Rajah pressed the little head close against his breast, as he answered:

"No, child, no. Not angry, quite. But hurt bitterly. Why did you not tell me all this long ago? I would have taken you to your aunt's. This Claude of yours does not appear to have done any better, however. What are you doing in this vulgar Englishman's house?"

"I will tell you all, indeed I will, my lord," she said, timidly. "While I was embarking on the prahu, a boat suddenly rowed out to attack us. Your people fired at the boat, and oh! I shall never forget the scene. A terrible gun they had in the boat commenced firing, and it sent forth a stream of bullets like a fire-engine. All the men on the prahu fell dead in a moment, and we fled for our lives up the streets. I hid in a house and heard Monsieur Claude calling me. I ran out to reproach him, but he would not listen. He carried me off and put me in a cabin, and from

there I heard shots and women's cries; and I knew what they were doing. Monsieur Claude tried to prevent the men from killing the women, but they would do it, and threatened to shoot him if he stopped them. And then they brought me away from there, and I thought I could go to Pondicherry at once, and send word to you. But they brought me here to this stupid house, and won't let me go."

And she began crying again.

"And what pretense do they give for keeping you?" asked the Rajah.

"Oh! they tell me that a young girl must not travel alone," she answered, pouting. "I must stay in their stupid old house till doomsday for their propriety. Oh! I hate propriety."

The Rajah laughed.

"And how have you been treated otherwise?"

"Oh! pretty well at first. When I came here Mademoiselle Julie was polite, and pretended to be very loving. But she's altered since then. And whenever she sees Monsieur Claude talking to me, she comes and interrupts us, and says spiteful things to me. Calls me a child, and wants to talk to Monsieur Claude all alone."

"And you, Marguerite," he asked, suddenly, "do you like to talk to Monsieur Claude so much?"

"Not now," she said. "He has broken his word to me and he is cruel. He ought to have taken me to my aunt Eulalie's, and not leave me here in this horrible position like a beggar."

"Marguerite," he said, suddenly, after a pause of silence, "if I promise truly to take you to Pondicherry, will you go with me?"

"Will you keep your promise?" she asked, half-reproachfully.

"I will, as there is a God above us," he said, solemnly. "To-morrow night, if you dare the venture, we will sail to Pondicherry, and you shall see your aunt Eulalie. Will you come?"

"I will," she said, and submitted silently to the kiss which the Rajah placed on her forehead.

"Then let us forgive and forget," he said, kindly; "I forgive you, child— Why, what's the matter?"

Marguerite half-started from him, and then cowered closer than ever in his arms, pointing silently to the entrance of the arbor.

Stealing down the walk toward them, with noiseless steps, was an immense royal tiger, the moonlight playing on his gaudy stripes, as he moved along at a stealthy pace, his great green eyes glaring hungrily. Marguerite gave a little sigh, and fainted dead away. The Rajah rose and faced the terrible beast alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TIGER.

"I OUGHT to have known it," muttered the Rajah, as he surveyed the monstrous brute silently creeping toward him. He felt how recklessly imprudent had been this midnight meeting, in a garden where tigers roved every night. The creatures swim across the narrow channel that separates Singapore Island from the mainland, during the night, and carry off several hundred human victims yearly.

The one in question was about a hundred feet off, at the moment when Marguerite first attracted the Rajah's attention to it, and came creeping along, just like a cat stalking a flock of pigeons.

When Marguerite fainted, the Rajah laid her back on the bench, and started up to confront the tiger. Drawing from his breast a long kriss, whose wavy edge showed it capable of inflicting a heavy wound, he rushed up the path to meet the formidable beast, with no more fear than if it had been a sheep.

And the tiger was true to its cowardly and ferocious character. As soon as the man came rushing toward it, the beast halted, and crouched close to the earth, as if hesitating whether to retreat or to spring.

The Rajah was an old tiger-hunter. He had often seen the hillmen from Java kill the tiger with nothing but a short dagger, and had learned their method from the men themselves.

He resolved to use the kriss in preference to the pistol, to

avoid alarming the house. As Don Gregorio, he did not wish Mr. Earle's household to find him in consultation with Marguerite.

So on he rushed, till he stood within twenty feet of the tiger, when he, too, halted.

Now the man and the beast looked at each other. The man stood erect, the right foot a little advanced, the body swaying with a supple motion, ready to advance or retreat.

The beast was crouched close to the earth, almost undistinguishable in the moonlight, so well did its striped body harmonize with the tints of the ground. Its great green eyes glowed like coals, and the tail slowly lashed from side to side. The body was quivering with eager motion, setting backward and forward, ready for its spring.

Now came the crisis.

The man stiffened into a statue, the tail of the beast ceased to oscillate. Then there was a sudden roar of eager desire, and the great body of the tiger flew through the air, full upon the man.

But the Rajah, cool, wary, and ready, sprung to one side as the tiger leaped.

The great beast missed its spring, and came to the earth, all in a heap, by the man.

In an instant the broad blade of the kriss gleamed in the air, and with a mighty blow, the Rajah tore open a great red gash in the creature's side, leaping back almost in the effort.

The beast uttered a howl of rage and pain, and turned to spring again.

Like all animals of the cat kind, its spring once balked, the tiger is not half so dangerous. A severe wound cowed it, moreover.

Again man and beast faced each other. The man was encouraged, the beast depressed. But the latter seemed determined to take its revenge.

While they stood thus, however, a noise was heard in the house. It was Claude Peyton's voice, shouting:

"Rouse up there! Rouse up! Tigers in the garden!"

The beast seemed to hesitate. It turned its head. The next moment the Red Rajah leaped upon it, with a loud shout. The shout completed the tiger's confusion. It turned round to flee.

With a second blow, delivered with all the force of an arm made like steel and wire for strength, the man slashed the beast across the loins, cutting the back-bone.

The tiger gave a furious roar, and turned round, clawing at its assailant. But the haunches dragged useless after the fore-quarters. The Rajah leaped actively back, and as the tiger dragged itself painfully up to the attack, a third heavy stroke laid open the beast's skull like an egg-shell.

Without waiting for any thing further, the pirate chief ran to the arbor wherein Marguerite was left, and found her reviving.

"Quick, Marguerite," he said, hurriedly, "slip round, and into the house—the back way. They must not see us together. The tiger's dead, and I'm not hurt. But the people in the house are alarmed. Run quick." The sound of voices and footsteps on the piazza was heard as he spoke.

With a readiness and courage that was hardly to be expected, the girl rose and slipped off, weak as she was after the fainting-fit.

The Rajah, or Don Gregorio, as he must be called *before other people*, ran up to the tiger, which lay breathing its last, resolved to attract the attention of any one coming.

He began to shout:

"Here! This way! Here he is!"

Presently he had the satisfaction of seeing a crowd of native servants dressed in white, who came rushing up, armed with every kind of chance weapon, and headed by Claude Peyton.

"The meddlesome fool!" muttered Don Gregorio, as he saw the other advance; "why did he come here to interfere?"

When the posse of servants arrived, there were loud cries of wonder and surprise, at the sight of the dead tiger, and the calm-looking gentleman who stood beside it, deliberately wiping a large Malay kriss on a bunch of leaves.

Claude grounded the rifle in astonishment and ejaculated:

"Good heavens, Don Gregorio! what have you been doing?"

"Taking a moonlight walk, Monsieur Claude," answered the other, sarcastically; "do you not see how I amuse myself, when I walk?"

Claude looked upon him with wonder, as the don quietly replaced the kriss in his bosom, where it was concealed. This stranger was the first man who put him at a disadvantage, and he could not account for the studied insolence of his manner.

"You must be crazy," he said, "to walk out here at night, when tigers are swarming all round."

"Are you afraid to stay?" demanded the don, with a sneer. "And yet you carry a rifle. I walk where I please. Will you follow me, *senor*?"

The servants stood gaping, for the conversation was carried on in French, which they did not understand. They could see that the two "*sahibs*" were not friendly; in fact the reverse.

Claude answered the don's innuendo with equal sarcasm:

"I do not deal in assassinations by night, Don Gregorio. I think that to-morrow's meeting might be enough to satisfy you; or, perhaps, like the rest of your countrymen, you prefer the *the knife in the dark* to the *sword in the daylight*."

Don Gregorio laughed, good-naturedly.

"A good answer, *senor*. Come, how shall we meet to-morrow? I have no friends in this town, and I must leave the arrangements to you."

"You have forced this duel upon me, Don Gregorio," said Claude, haughtily. "It is my privilege to name time, place, and weapons. I name eleven o'clock to-morrow, a mile from here, in a quiet spot in the jungle. I will bring two of the officers of the garrison here, whom I know, and we fight with the small sword. I warn you that you will repent your insolence."

"Be it so," said the don, bowing. "And now, *senor*, I propose that we retire. The servants can do what they like with this."

And he kicked the dead body of the tiger as he spoke, and sauntered off.

As Don Gregorio entered the house, he saw a head looking out from the window above him. Before it was withdrawn, he recognized the golden hair of Julia Earle.

"Humph!" How long has she been there, I wonder?" muttered Don Gregorio Rodriguez.

CHAPTER XVII.

MISS EARLE.

THE next morning, every one was down to breakfast bright and early. Don Gregorio made his appearance in the same solemn black as on the evening before, but Claude and his host were both in cool white duck. Don Gregorio's glance was bent anxiously on Marguerite as she came in. The child looked pale, as if she had passed a poor night, but no remarks from any one indicated that she had been seen outside.

When Julia Earle came down to table, breakfast was half over. The young lady was a perfect picture of health and beauty. Don Gregorio's bow of greeting was lower than usual. In spite of himself, he felt pleased with Julia's dazzling looks.

Miss Earle opened a rattling conversation with the don, and brought every one at table in. The only silent one this morning was Claude. He was anxious to get away about his business, and excused himself as soon as possible.

"At what o'clock shall I expect you, *monsieur*?" asked Rodriguez, as he left the room.

"As soon as I can get back," returned the Virginian; "I will bring a horse for you."

"*Au revoir*," said the don, pleasantly; and the sailor left the room.

"What are you going to do this morning?" asked Julia, of the don, as Claude left.

"We are to take a ride through the country, and see the lions," he responded. "The *Senor Claudio* has promised to make up a party with some officers from the garrison."

"But I thought that he sailed this morning?" said Julia, looking at him shrewdly.

"He has given up the idea, at my request, *senorita*."

"Indeed?" said the lady. "Why, you must have fascinated the gentleman, Don Gregorio."

"I have sometimes been told that I have fascinating manners," said Don Gregorio, calmly.

Julia Earle looked at him for several minutes, but the don was too old an actor to be disconcerted.

The old merchant had taken his departure to his warehouse before this, and Marguerite was the only other person in the room besides the servants.

Julia suddenly rose from the table.

"Don Gregorio," she said, "will you come into the garden a few minutes? I want to speak to you."

Artless little Marguerite started guiltily. She could not conceal her emotions. Julia did not seem to notice her, however. Don Gregorio rose and bowed.

"I shall be only too happy, with so charming a companion," he said.

The lady took his arm, and they left the room, poor little Marguerite remaining behind, half fearing, half doubting that something was the matter.

Julia, as she passed through the hall, caught up a broad hat, and set it on her sunny curls, and then walked quietly by Don Gregorio's side till they reached the eventful arbor.

There she took her seat, and spread out her gauzy skirts over the bench, like white billows. Don Gregorio stood before her, hat in hand, and waited for the lady to open the conversation.

From a certain meaning look, it was evident that something was on her mind.

"Don Gregorio," she said, presently, "do you think I have good eyesight?"

"If the beauty of the organ betokens strength of vision, senorita, your eyesight must be wonderful."

And the don bowed low.

"Thank you, senor. Compliments apart, I can see as far as most people. Well, then, will you please to look toward the house?"

"I obey, senorita."

"You see that there is an opening in this arbor?"

"I do."

"And opposite to it there is a window?"

"Well, senorita?"

"Well, senor. That window is mine."

"Happy window!" said Don Gregorio, sentimentally.

"You are fond of moonlight walks, senor, I see. You take them even when there are tigers about. I saw the creature you killed. But then, senor, other people may be fond of moonlight. I am, for one. I prefer to enjoy it from my window. There was a beautiful moon last night, Don Gregorio; but I should never have dreamed of walking out to enjoy it. I saw you go out, and I thought to myself that you were rash. But I did not know you well enough to remonstrate with you. So I kept still by my window behind the curtains."

Don Gregorio stood looking at her steadily with a cool but rather stern gaze. He did not try any more compliments. He was measuring his situation. How much did this girl know or suspect?

Julia looked at him in turn out of her magnificent blue eyes. Her gaze was one of decided admiration for the bold, handsome stranger. She waited for him to speak.

"Well, senorita, and is that all you have to tell me?" he asked, at last.

"Not quite," she replied, smiling. "I saw you walk out into the garden and disappear among the bushes. I had almost made up my mind to call to you, and warn you, when I saw another figure come out and follow you. Senor Don Gregorio Rodriguez, that second figure was a woman. More than that, it was Marguerite, and I knew her."

"Well, well," he said, abruptly. "To the end of this. You saw that. What else did you see?"

"I saw you two together in this arbor, senor. You seemed to be on excellent terms for people introduced last night. I resolved to be sure. I beheld you through an opera-glass. It was you and Marguerite de Favannes, and she lay in your arms, and you kissed her. That set me to thinking. I said to myself, 'They have seen each other before. Where was it?' And as I thought, I could come to but one conclusion. Either Marguerite de Favannes is a loose, abandoned wretch without a shred of character—"

"Hush! if you please," he said, sternly.

"Or," she went on, quietly, "Don Gregorio Rodriguez is an impostor, and has known her before. And the only man who has known her before is—"

She paused.

Don Gregorio Rodriguez drew himself up to his full height.

"You are quite right," he said. "I will spare you further words. I am the Red Rajah."

Julia Earle looked at him now with undisguised interest.

"You are a brave man," she said, quietly. "A desperate man. Do you not fear your enemies here? Think. If I were to denounce you, death on the gallows would be your portion."

"But you will not denounce me," he said, coolly.

"Why not?"

"Because, to do it, pretty lady, you must go to Singapore. Bethink you. You are alone in this garden with a noted PIRATE, whose very name signifies the blood he has shed. What is to prevent my burying a kriss in your white bosom, and leaving here before any one knows of it?"

"Every thing, my lord Rajah," she answered, rising, and looking him straight in the eye, without blenching or quailing. "In the first place, you are no Malay."

"How do you know?" he asked.

"Every feature of your face is Caucasian, and no Malay ever spoke French as you do. Being a Caucasian, you are not a coward. So I am safe."

"Necessity may make a man do many things," he answered.

"Well, then, there is a second reason. If you were to murder me, how could you get to sea? It would be found out before noon, and the whole squadron lies in port. How could your vessel pass under the guns of five frigates and the Avenger?"

Even while she spoke, came the boom of a distant gun.

"There is your answer!" said the Red Rajah, with a smile of triumph, folding his arms, and standing before her. "The squadron is under way now, to sail after the Red Rajah. And while they are hunting for a vanished nation, among a desolated Archipelago, the Red Rajah himself stands in Singapore; and his fleet lies hidden in fifty little creeks round here; and his men are scattered all round this very plantation. Do you want to see which of us is in the other's power, Miss Earle? If you do, sound this whistle."

And he drew from his vest pocket a small whistle of gold, set with diamonds, and offered it to her.

"No, my fair lady," he continued; "your watching last night was very ingenious, no doubt. You found out something, but you made the worst night's work of your life."

"What do you want here, then?" demanded Julia, turning a little pale.

"I *did* want only one thing," he answered. "It was my little Marguerite, who was stolen from me. She was my child-angel. In her I seemed to see my youth once more, the days when I was good and happy. Well, if it had not been for you, I should have taken her away, and left this Claude to you. Marguerite says you're fond of him. You would have lost a rival. Now I've changed my mind."

"And what will you do now?" she asked, shrinking back in spite of herself, before this singular man.

"Instead of one, I shall take two," he replied, a grim smile curling his mustache. "We Malay pirates are all Mahommedans, you know. You shall be the sultana of my harem. And as for your Claude, he dies to-day, for stealing Marguerite, and burning my palace."

Julia turned from white to the brightest scarlet in a moment. She trembled and her eyes sought the ground. The words of the Red Rajah were brutally plain, and she felt herself so utterly in his power. She had come out, triumphant and ready to torment him, meaning to warn him away, and allow him to escape at last.

Now the tables were turned. But was she to escape? While she stood confused, a second loud boom was heard. The Rajah laid his hand on her arm, and pointed seaward.

"The Palms" overlooked Singapore and the bay. There, out in the offing, the white sails of the squadron were to be seen, shining in the sun, as they pointed their bowsprits eastward, toward the hidden shores of mysterious Borneo.

"There goes the last of your friends," said the Red Rajah, sarcastically; "and here comes the first of my enemies."

As he spoke, the sound of horse-hoofs was heard, and the next minute a group of horsemen rode up the broad gravel sweep that led to Mr. Earle's house. Julia Earle was going to scream for help, but the Rajah checked her with a simple gesture. He held up the whistle.

"Be careful, girl," he said. "If you want to see them all krissed in one half-minute, scream."

Julia was silent.

"Now listen," he continued; "I am going away with these gentlemen. You may take it into your head to try to

get to Singapore, and spread an alarm. Now let me warn you. There will be fifty men lurking in this jungle till I come back. They have orders to kriss every living creature that tries to escape. It is quite an ugly weapon, this kriss, Miss Earle. Look at it. These wavy lines tear the flesh terribly. Every man will have one of them. I should regret to have you krissed. It would pain me ineffably. But if you try to escape, it will happen. Try it, and you'll see them all killed before your eyes. A word to the wise. Now, farewell. I must go and see my friends."

The Rajah stalked off to the house, leaving Julia alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TABOO TREE.

CLAUDE PEYTON was standing on the steps of the veranda with three other gentlemen. A group of native servants, holding several horses, stood on the gravel sweep outside. The white men were talking together when Don Gregorio approached them, and turned to meet him at once.

The don advanced leisurely, scanning the group as he came. They were all officers of Native Infantry in their undress uniform; and the brown case which one of them carried proclaimed the surgeon.

Claude advanced to meet the don with a stately bow. His turn was coming, he felt. He could not be put down by this man's insolence any longer.

"Señor Claudio, I salute you," said Rodriguez, politely.

Claude bowed again; but so slightly, so frigidly, that the courtesy became almost an insult. Then he turned to the officers who accompanied him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "allow me to introduce to you Don Gregorio Rodriguez, a Spanish gentleman from Manila. He will join our riding party, at his own request. Don Gregorio, Captain Grey, Captain Manvers, and Dr. Brown. Captain Manvers has kindly consented to act as your friend, and show you the country."

Ceremonious bows from all the gentlemen.

"I am truly obliged to Capitan Manvairs," answered the don, speaking the broken English he affected in company. The captain bowed again. He was a heavy Indian officer, renowned for his proficiency in "the code."

"Very happy, I'm sure," he answered, in a deep bass voice. "In these matters, I always believe in taking time by the forelock, gentlemen. The authorities have no time to interfere. Shall we get to horse? We can arrange our little matters on the way, you know."

It is surprising how punctilious a second becomes on his principal's behalf, and how anxious to engage. But in this case both principals were equally anxious. Claude was completely exasperated; and the don was determined to have revenge for the loss the other had made him sustain.

"I agree with you, captain," said the Spanish gentleman. "Which of these horses, may I ask, is intended for me?"

Claude indicated the animal.

"I thank you, sare," said Rodriguez.

Then he turned and called out:

"Muda! Muda!"

A little swarthy Malay came from the house, stealthy and barefoot. It was the don's servant.

The latter handed him a magnificent kriss and a small gold-mounted revolver, with which Muda went into the house.

"Now, senores, *vamonos*," said the don, gayly, swinging himself into the saddle, as he spoke; "let us depart. I am in your hands."

Five minutes afterward, Julia Earle, still sitting in the arbor, meditating over her singular position, saw the whole cavalcade sweeping down the broad gravel road, on their way to the jungle outside.

She started up, and hurried to the house, determined to alarm the servants at any hazard, and make some attempt to escape to Singapore.

We must leave her, to follow the "riding party." As soon as they were outside the plantation and entered the jungle, they turned to the left, and took a side road which led into the back country, along which they rode for some time.

Captain Manvers entered into conversation with the principals, as to the details of the coming duel. He was de-

lighted with the readiness with which the Spaniard accepted his suggestions.

"*Caro, senor*," said Rodriguez; "you s'all arrange heem as you s'all laike. I put myself in your hand. Vell, den, you are my second, and vy should I discommode myself till ve are on de ground?"

"Don Gregorio," said the captain, "you are a man after my own heart, and it's a pleasure to act for you. I hope I may have that honor many a time, yet."

"*Gracias, senor*," returned the Spaniard. "Ven s'all ve get to dis ground?"

"It's close by, now," said Manvers. "Grey and I went out there about a month ago, when he shot Paddy Blake, of the Fusiliers. Paddy was a good fellow, Don Gregorio; but Grey sent him home invalided. It's a sweet little spot of ground for an affair. Just a nice distance for pistol-shooting, and the ground smooth as a billiard-table. It's a pity you and your friend, there, didn't choose pistols, don. There's something so neat in popping a man over at ten paces."

"Eet is not our affair, senor," interposed the don, with a polite smile. "Howevair, I t'ink dat we can manage to keel each odair with de sword."

"I suppose so," admitted the captain. "Well, here we are, now."

As he spoke, Captain Grey, who rode with Peyton and the doctor at the head of the party, wheeled off sharp to the right, down a narrow jungle path, and in five minutes after the ground was reached.

As Manvers had said, it was a sweet spot for an affair. A cool, green, grassy glade, about a hundred by fifty yards, the ground smooth as velvet. A wall of tangled jungle, matted with twisting ratan, and encircling lofty teak-trees, shut in the little glade from intrusion. There was no human habitation within ten miles of the place.

"Now, then, Manvers," sung out Captain Grey, "where shall we put 'em?"

"Here, I think," responded the brother-officer. "Keep the horses back there, or the ground will be all cut up. Better dismount before we examine it."

The whole party accordingly dismounted from their horses, which were led off by the *syces* to the bottom of the glade. The two principals stood apart from the rest, buried in their own thoughts. The doctor retired to a shady spot under a tree, where he opened his case of instruments, and examined them with the cold-blooded pride peculiar to his amiable profession. The two seconds inspected every inch of the ground, as carefully as if it had been a croquet-ground. They fell into little discussions over every lump on the turf, and finally went into raptures over one particular place, about fifty feet square.

"Such a place never was seen," protested Manvers, and Grey agreed with him.

Now they returned to the side of the glade where their principals stood.

"Come, gentlemen," said Manvers, briskly, "we're all ready for you now. Grey has the swords, which we have measured, and find correct. Will you be pleased to undress?"

Claude took off his coat, and handed it to his second, and the don imitated his example. Vests followed, and then came the question of searching both parties for concealed armor, according to the practice in these little "affairs."

Peyton obviated the necessity in his own case for search by stripping off his shirt, and standing there naked to the waist. The don preferred to retain his shirt apparently.

Now at last everything was ready. The swords, light, thin blades, with keen points, were placed in the hands of the men, and they were conducted to the ground by their seconds.

The spot selected was admirably smooth. The seconds had even refrained from stepping on it, for fear of trampling the surface. Claude felt the elastic turf under his feet, and took the post assigned to him by Captain Grey.

Now, for the first time, the two men scanned each other closely, as they stood within ten feet.

The seconds retired, and watched their men.

"By Jove! They're a splendid match," whispered Grey to Manvers.

And so they were.

Both gentlemen were very nearly equal in height. The slight advantage possessed in this respect by the Spaniard was balanced by the heavier frame of the young Virginian. Their faces were strikingly different in coloring, but similar in contour.

The florid complexion, brown hair and mustache of Claude, were contrasted with the dark pale face of the Spanish gentleman, with its intensely black hair eyes. But their profiles were both high and aquiline, and their general appearance, when close together, was that of an "excellent match," as the captain said.

Don Gregorio and Claude advanced slowly and cautiously toward each other, and crossed swords.

In so doing, it seemed, for the first time, the Spaniard's eyes became fixed on Claude's breast.

There, tattooed in faint, blue marks, was the mysterious symbol of the serpent-circled tree.

No sooner did the don see the mark, than his whole demeanor changed. From a quiet, sneering, impassive gentleman, he suddenly became an astounded man, overwhelmed with some mysterious emotion.

Uttering a sort of cry of horror or terror, he sprung back several paces, and stood, shaking all over, pointing at Claude with his left hand.

He was as pale and terror-stricken as a man who had just seen a ghost.

Claude himself was astonished at the other's demeanor. Involuntarily his sword followed that of Rodriguez, and sunk to the ground, where the point stayed.

Don Gregorio turned a gray, ashy face on Captain Manvers, as he pointed with trembling finger to the young Virginian.

"Who is that man? What is his name?" he asked, in low, husky tones.

Captain Manvers was astonished and shocked. Such an outrage on dueling proprieties had never occurred in his experience.

"Confound it, man!" he answered, angrily, "you should have asked these questions before you crossed swords. Do you want to get out of a fight on the very ground? It can't be done, while I am your second."

The Spaniard appeared hardly to hear him. He turned to Grey, instead.

"Oblige me, sir," he said, hurriedly, and in perfect English; "what is this gentleman's name? I did not know it."

"I am at a loss to understand your question, sir," replied Grey, haughtily. "What is your object in asking it? I should recommend my principal to answer it with his sword. Manvers, I'm afraid Peyton has been trapped into an affair with a braggart white-feather." And the English captain's lip curled scornfully.

But Don Gregorio did not seem to heed either of them. He only caught the last name.

"Peyton, did you say?" he asked. "Is his name Peyton? They called him Claude."

Don Gregorio was in a strange state. He hardly seemed to be in his senses. He stared around him with ashy face, the drops of sweat pouring from his brow. But Peyton had recovered from his surprise. He saw in this, like the others, only an attempt to deprive him of satisfaction. He spoke himself now.

"My name is Claude Peyton, Don Gregorio Rodriguez. Claude Peyton it was whom you insulted last night; twice insulted, and most grossly. You can not do away with that now, I can tell you. Raise your sword and defend yourself, sir. My turn is come."

Don Gregorio turned round to him.

"If I had known who you were, sir," he said, in a low voice, but still with a sort of dignity struggling with his evident agitation, "I should not have said what I did. I entreat you to press this affair no further."

"It is too late, Don Gregorio!" said the other, fiercely; "do you think that you can call me a coward, without blood being shed? I begin to think that some one else is the coward. Defend yourself, quickly, or I'll run you through."

And he advanced fiercely on the Spaniard. Don Gregorio dropped his weapon and opened his arms.

"Stab, then," he said, quietly; "I will not fight you."

Claude Peyton trembled all over with passion.

"Heavens!" he cried; "how can I stab an unarmed man? Am I not a Virginian? Take up your sword, sir, or you are no gentleman. What! Are you to insult me, and then refuse me satisfaction except at the price of an assassination? Take up your sword, I say. You *must* give me satisfaction! You owe it as a gentleman, if you were my own brother. Take up your sword, I say!"

Don Gregorio stood looking at the other with a strange glance. Claude was boiling with passion. The two captains were stamping and cursing to each other. They were

like the spectators at a prize-fight when one of the men has sold the fight. They were wild with rage. The Spaniard spoke at last.

"You have come from Virginia, Mr. Peyton," he said; "you know the rules of honor. I yield to you. I will give you satisfaction."

He stood looking at Claude for a moment more, with that strange look. Then he stooped, and picked up the sword, and stood on guard.

The Virginian attacked him at once, with all the skill in fence he was possessed of, and that was considerable. If it had not been, he would never have chosen the weapons he did.

But he found, to his surprise, that Don Gregorio's skill was greater than his own. His arm was like iron. Again and again did the Virginian try to pass the bright point, that remained confronted to him, slight-looking but formidable barrier.

That point kept quivering in small circles, and parried every thrust he made, the don standing like a bronze statue.

Captain Manvers rubbed his hands, and observed to Grey: "Pretty shaky, things began to look—eh! Grey? But he fights beautifully now. Look at that figure!"

Claude was compelled to desist after a while, from pure exhaustion. Three times had he almost run on the don's point in his eagerness, and three times the light prick warned him back in time.

The Spaniard made no advance on his part, and both parties rested their points on the ground, by mutual consent.

"Your temper is too quick, Mr. Peyton," observed Don Gregorio, calmly; "you fence too fast, and expose yourself too much."

Claude frowned angrily, but made no reply. He kept his breath for the second round. Presently, he was sufficiently recovered to resume the fight. This time, he went slowly and cautiously to work. He had learnt enough of the Spaniard's skill to take his advice. He fought warily, and kept himself well covered. But with all his long-concerted attacks, he could not puzzle the don.

Every lunge was parried, and that ugly looking point was constantly arresting further progress, with the cool "stop-thrust." Claude grew wild as he grew weaker, and finally making a desperate lunge, slipped and fell to the ground.

But Don Gregorio never offered to molest him while he lay there. He simply drew back, and rested his sword on the ground.

Claude scrambled to his feet and stood panting. He felt inexpressibly mortified. His life had been in the Spaniard's power, and he had been spared. Don Gregorio again addressed him, in his sad, deep voice.

"Are you not satisfied yet? Will nothing but my blood content you? Look here, Mr. Peyton; I have shown these gentlemen that it was not fear that actuated me just now. I apologize for my words. You are no coward. Will you let this matter drop?"

Claude was a generous fellow, as we know.

"The quarrel was not of my seeking, Don Gregorio," he said; "I am satisfied."

And he threw down his sword on the grass.

Then the don turned round to Captain Manvers, and his manner changed instantly. He became as coolly insolent as he had been forbearing and generous. "Captain Manvers," he said, "you were good enough to insinuate several things against my courage just now. Be pleased to take up that sword, and I will show you in five minutes that an English bully is the last person in the world that I fear."

And, as he spoke, he struck the astounded captain a back-handed blow across the mouth with his left hand, that started the "claret."

Manvers gave a sort of roar of rage, and rushed for the sword, with which he flew at the Spaniard. Rodriguez gave but one long, straight lunge, and the unhappy Englishman fell to the earth, run through the throat, and choking in death.

The sudden impromptu duel took place so suddenly, that neither Claude nor Grey could interfere between the slap, the clash of swords, and the final stab.

The Spaniard seemed transformed into a demon, as he wrenched the bloody steel away from Manvers' body. He turned fiercely on Grey, who stood aghast, a half-scared spectator of the sudden slaughter of his brother-officer.

"And you, too, sir?" he snarled. "Braggart white-feather were the words you used. Stand up to it, English dog, or die like one!"

Captain Grey was a brave man, but he turned pale before the concentrated ferocity of the Spaniard's glance. How-

ever, he felt that he could not refuse the challenge. He picked up the sword fallen from Manvers' hand, and stood on his defense.

Claude stood dumbfounded at the sudden change of events. What or who was this strange being, so soft and gentle to him, so ferocious to others?

He saw Grey take off his coat and vest hurriedly, and throw them down, after which he stood on his defense.

The combat was plainly unequal. Grey was overmatched and knew it. Rodriguez towered nearly a foot above him, for the Englishman was a small man. He made no feints. Only strong, straight lunges, one after the other, all aimed at the throat, and following one another so rapidly that the captain was compelled to back out of the contest, retreat being the only way to keep those lunges out. But as they came, fierce and fast, each one came nearer, and poor Grey was beaten back, back, back, till at last the sharp point was buried in his throat.

Then Don Gregorio laid down the bloody sword beside the corpse of his second victim, and turned to Claude.

"You see, sir, I was not afraid."

Claude looked at him with wonder.

"In the name of God, who are you?" he ejaculated.

The Spaniard took from his pocket a small gold whistle which he held up to the other.

"You see that. You shall be answered in a moment."

He blew a loud, shrill whistle. Instantly there was a rustle in the jungle, and two hundred wild-looking Malays burst in upon the scene, surrounding the frightened horseholders with bare krisses.

The Spaniard drew himself up to his full height, and pointed to the scarlet dresses of his men.

"Do you know me now?" he asked. "Do you wonder that I insulted you for stealing my Marguerite? You may thank the taboo mark on your breast that saved you from death this day, for I am the Red Rajah."

CHAPTER XIX.

STOLEN AWAY.

WHEN the Red Rajah had announced himself in his true character, to Claude Peyton, with all his band around him, the Virginian was thunderstruck. He stood staring, unable to speak, for some minutes.

While he hesitated, the Rajah addressed some orders, in Malay, to his band. Instantly the trembling *syces*, or grooms, who held the horses, were seized, along with the amazed Doctor Brown, who expected to be murdered.

Inside of two minutes the whole posse were bound hand and foot, and laid in the middle of the glade, while the Rajah was calmly dressing.

Claude Peyton stood wondering, and expecting every moment to be served the same way as the rest. But to his surprise, no one offered to touch him. The mysterious taboo sign which had saved his life from the Papuan cannibals seemed to spread its ægis over him everywhere.

He stood wondering at everything, when the Rajah, erect and precise in his attire as ever, stepped up to him and addressed him. He did not attempt any more broken English now.

"Mr. Peyton," he said, gravely and politely, "you are safe from harm; but you must give me your word of honor, as a Virginian gentleman, that you will not try to leave this glade until sunset. Otherwise I must bind you, too."

Claude was forced to submit; but his curiosity induced him to ask a question.

"Tell me, sir, one thing, if you please. What is there in this mark on my breast that has such a marvelous influence on all the world? Among the savages it saved my life, under the war-club. Here it seems equally powerful. What is the spell?"

"Mr. Peyton," replied the other, with a grave smile, "it is an old saying full of sense, 'Take the goods the gods provide.' Ask me no questions. Remember, on your word as a gentleman, you are to stay here till sunset. After that you may loose your companions. Attempt to leave before, and even my power will not prevent your death by the krisses of my men. One word more of advice. You went to seek the Red Rajah. Take care that you do not follow him again. The taboo tree will not protect you next time."

He bowed and turned away. The horses on which the dueling party had come to the glade were brought forward, and the Rajah mounted.

"Farewell, Mr. Peyton," he said, courteously.

Then the little cavalcade swept out of the glade at a gallop. The footmen disappeared in the jungle. Claude Peyton was left all alone in the glade to his own thoughts.

"Not alone, though," he said to himself, as he watched the rueful countenances of his bound companions. There they lay, as helpless as trussed turkeys, tied hand and foot, each man with a gag thrust into his mouth. And Claude was bound in honor not to touch them. And why not? He was perfectly free and unfettered. He could untie them with perfect ease. No.

A trifle, light as air, withheld him. A cobweb thread that a breath would part.

And yet, to him, it was a chain cable of steel. The impalpable sentiment of honor was to him an impassable barrier between him and them.

His life had been spared by that Red Rajah, whom he had only heard stigmatized as a bloody pirate. He had been spared several times, when the other held him completely in his power. His honor had been relied on by that other, when bonds would have made him safe.

Claude Peyton walked quietly over to where his discarded garments lay, and slowly dressed himself. He did not dare to look round at his companions, for fear of their appealing glances to him.

When he had dressed, he walked around the glade once, peering into the jungle to see if any one was left to spy upon him. Not a soul was to be seen.

He returned to his companions, and dragged them out of the hot sun, one after another, under the shade of a lofty teak tree. Then he untied the gag which confined the doctor's mouth, and explained matters to the worthy physician. Luckily for all parties, there was a considerable stock of cheroots in Claude's pockets, and he and the doctor were enabled to pass away the time till sunset in talking and smoking.

At last they heard the well-known evening gun booming from the casemates of Fort St. John.

"Hurrah!" cried the doctor, feebly. "Now we get off at last."

"Thank God!" ejaculated Peyton.

He produced his knife in a minute, and cut the doctor's bonds. The two together very soon freed the *syces*, and were ready to depart.

"We must get out of here as soon as possible," said Doctor Brown, hurriedly. "The whole jungle is full of tigers after dark, and we are not safe a minute."

The advice was so obviously sound that it did not need to be repeated. The dead bodies of the two unfortunate officers were necessarily left. They could not stay a moment. Picking up only the two dueling swords, which had been left behind, the whole party ran off by the jungle path, as hard as they could go; and never halted till they reached the road by which they came in the morning.

But their dangers were not over yet. In the jungle all round them they could hear the answering roars of roaming tigers. Doctor Brown, who was a short, puffy man, with red mutton-chop whiskers, was quite blown with his run.

"By Jove, Peyton!" he ejaculated, "we must walk a bit. I'm blessed if I can get any further at this pace."

The cowardly *syces* were too much afraid to remain with the doctor, and they were not much to blame. All unarmed as they were, they could make no resistance, should a tiger appear. While they continued their wild race to Singapore, Claude and the doctor came on slowly behind, each armed with a sword.

It was nervous work on that dark jungle road. The twilight was so short that it seemed as if day turned into night in a moment.

They could hear the tigers all round them, coming closer and closer to the road.

"Shall we ever get to Singapore?" asked Doctor Brown, apprehensively, as a roar within a quarter of a mile made him shiver.

"Not to-night," replied Claude, cheerfully. "Here we are at the edge of Mr. Earle's jungle patch, and we shall be safe in a few minutes more."

They turned down the broad gravel road that led to "The Palms," as he spoke. Doctor Brown felt doubly thankful that they had left the last roar behind them, and that they were approaching a human habitation.

They walked rapidly along the broad white road that

gleamed through the darkness. The moon had not risen and the stars were yet hidden in the evening mists. Claude felt a strange beating at his heart. Some calamity, he felt sure, had happened. The glimpse he had had of the Red Rajah's character made him certain that that chieftain would not leave empty-handed. Marguerite was gone certainly. As the thought crossed him, a spasm of pain convinced the young man how he had grown to love the little island princess.

"Ah!" he groaned to himself, "if I had taken her to Pondicherry this would never have happened. But I did it for the best."

And it was true. In a vessel belonging where it did, he could do no less than come to Singapore. Who would ever have supposed that a Malay sea-robber would have been able to hoodwink Europeans as he had?

"The man is no Malay, that is plain," said Claude, aloud.

"What man?" demanded the doctor, who thought he was addressed.

"The Red Rajah."

"Malay? Never!" said the doctor, who was an ethnologist in his tastes: "no Malay ever bore a face and figure like him. The man's either an Englishman or an American, or else he's the devil himself. Why, Peyton, what's this? What's the matter here?"

As he spoke, they entered the garden and beheld Mr. Earle's house before them, every door and window wide open, and a perfect illumination at every opening.

"Do they have a ball here to-night?" asked the doctor, nervously; "for, if so, we look pretty objects, I must say."

Claude made no answer, except to rush across the garden and up the piazza steps. The house was still and silent. Into the dining-room ran Claude. Fifty wax candles, stuck into every nook and corner, made a perfect blaze of light. But the room was empty. He rushed from room to room, followed by the doctor, shouting in vain for the servants. No one answered. Every door was opened. Lamps and candles blazed everywhere. The illumination only revealed the emptiness.

In the midst of his agitation the idea of an enchanted palace flashed over Claude's mind and made him laugh to himself. But the wizard who had made the enchantment could only be one man, the Red Rajah.

At last he went into the drawing-room, which was lighted up more brilliantly than the other, and in a recklessly extravagant manner.

Mr. Earle's best wax and spermaceti candles were stuck upright, in little pools of grease, all over the polished piano top. The center-table was covered with them, and every available place was occupied.

But, what attracted most attention was that in the center of the room a Dyak spear was stuck upright in the floor, and attached to the butt was a large paper.

"The explanation of the mystery," said Claude, as he snatched the paper and proceeded to read it, with the wonder-struck Doctor Brown.

It ran thus:

"The Red Rajah to Earle, Hoskins & Co.:

"Your senior partner, with seven other merchants, chartered a brig to make war on me. You burnt my house and took my child when I was away. Now I have taken your head and his daughter and hold them. One million of dollars in gold is their ransom.

"If it is not paid within one month they shall both die.

"PATONG RAJAH,
Known as 'The Red.'"

"That's a pretty document to have in a gentleman's house," ejaculated Doctor Brown. "What's to be done, Peyton?"

"We must get to Singapore somehow, to-night," said the Virginian, briskly, "if we have to do it on foot."

"My dear fellow! Impossible!" cried the prudent doctor; "there are tigers enough about to eat up a whole family of men like me."

"We can find arms," said Claude, hurriedly; "it must be done. The desperate villain has carried off every living soul in the house, I do believe. There's not a sign of a human being anywhere."

"What's that?" cried the doctor, starting; "there's some one in that cupboard."

Claude bounded toward the place indicated. It was a small press or cupboard behind the piano corner, devoted to music books. The door was half open, and a slight movement was perceptible.

There was a terrified cry as the Virginian advanced. He soon emerged from the cupboard, holding by the collar a small Malay boy, whom Claude recognized as Julia Earle's favorite page.

The child was wild-eyed with terror, but a few kind words from Claude convinced him that no harm was intended him.

In time he recognized the Virginian, and began to sob and cry, and pour forth a flood of impassioned Malay, telling of the adventures of that terrible day.

Claude questioned him very closely, and soon managed to elicit from him the outlines of the following story.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PAGE'S STORY.

THE story of the page was short and simple.

About noon of that same day, a quantity of men on horseback had surrounded the house. Missy Julia and Missy Marguerite were in the drawing-room, when the men came. The tall Sahib who had come there yesterday was at their head. Missy Julia was crying. He, little Ismail, was frightened at the looks of the men, but the rest of the servants did not seem to care. They went out to welcome the Sahib. The Sahib staid in the drawing-room with Missy Julia and Missy Marguerite for some time. Then he came out and issued orders to his men. Most of them went away, and the house was quite quiet for some time. At four o'clock Mr. Earle came home. The tall Sahib received him, but the young ladies had gone to their rooms. While the Sahib was talking with Mr. Earle on the porch, he, Ismail, crept into the drawing-room, and hid himself in the music-closet, to listen. The Sahib came back and brought Mr. Earle into the drawing-room. Mr. Earle looked frightened, and the tall Sahib spoke as if he was a Rajah, and the other's master.

"After Mr. Earle's arrival, the men began to come back, and the Sahib went out on the porch. Mr. Earle, in the drawing-room, walked up and down, and cried out:

"Oh! my poor child! my poor child! A robber, a pirate! How shall I ever pay him? What shall I do? How I have been deceived!"

"Then the Sahib came back into the room, and said:

"Come, Mr. Earle, the prahus are waiting in the creek."

"And Mr. Earle began to beg the Sahib to let him off. But the Sahib stamped his foot, and said in a terrible voice:

"Am I a fool, old man? Your squadron is gone, but it may be back. You may write to your house for the money. You may send letters to your friends to get it. But you must come with me now. I give you fifteen minutes to get ready."

"And then the Sahib went outside again, and Ismail heard the roll of wheels, as if several carriages were coming up. And pretty soon Missy Marguerite came in, with Missy Julia.

"And Missy Julia ran to her father and kissed him, and they cried together.

"Then the Sahib came in and spoke to them, and Missy Marguerite she got angry, and say:

"Very well, my lord. Then I will never love you any more. You have deceived me again."

"And the Sahib he frowned, and stamped his foot, and said:

"Be it so," quite angrily.

"And after some more talk, every one left, and Ismail heard them getting into the carriages. He peeped out of the window and saw that they had harnessed up all Mr. Earle's horses to his different carriages and carts, and they were all driving away, out through the back road."

"What back road?" interrupted Claude.

"The road to the creek," said the boy. "It goes through the jungle, and comes out on the back of the island."

"And after they had gone, who lighted all these?" asked Claude, pointing to the candles.

"After they went," said the boy, "I was going through the house, when I heard voices in the garden. Soon after, the strange men came back, some of them, and came into this room. I hid myself before they came, and I heard them talking about a Rajah, and how they were to go off to meet him at night. Then they went down into the cellar, and

came back with several bottles of wine, and began to drink. They staid till nearly sunset, when one of them said:

"It is time to obey my lord's orders."

"Then they went into the store-room, and brought out six boxes of candles, and began to light them, and stick them everywhere, till the sun set, and we heard the gun in the harbor. Then one of them stuck that spear into the floor, where you see it, and put the paper on the top."

"Then they went away and I was left alone. It grew dark outside, and it was so silent here, I was afraid to come out. I feared that the tigers were coming, too. So I staid here, till I heard more voices, and you came in, Sahib, and I thought I was to be killed, surely."

Claude pondered over this story for several minutes. It was evident that the Red Rajah had laid his plans carefully. He must have bribed all the servants, except this boy, by some means. Where were they now? How had this audacious pirate contrived to get the prisoners away, and where had he fled to?

Claude turned to the doctor.

"Doctor," he said, "I must go to the city at once. The squadron has gone, but the prahu I took from that Rajah lies there still, with a Gatling gun on board. I must be off after him this very night."

"But how will you get to Singapore to-night?" asked the amazed doctor. "The road's all full of tigers."

"There must be some weapons left in the house," said Claude. "They've not stripped any of the rooms, I see, and there must be some in mine. Here, Ismail, are there any horses left in the stables?"

"There is one, Sahib," answered the boy, respectfully. "I heard the men telling of him. No one could mount him, he was so fierce. It is the black stallion they call Mankiller."

"I remember him," said Claude; "it's the little vicious Arab, doctor. Well, vicious or kind, I must ride him. Come along, doctor. I must leave you to take care of the house. Ha! listen to that!"

The roar of a tiger, close to the front of the house, made them start. Claude ran down to the porch, and caught sight of the striped body, creeping along over the gravel walk. He shouted loudly, and the beast turned, and bounded into the bushes. Then they closed all the doors and windows on the lower floor, to keep out such intruders. Ismail was sent up-stairs to put out the lights, while Claude proceeded to arm himself.

He found his room quite undisturbed, except for the illumination. His weapons stood in the press in the corner of the room. Not so much as an article of jewelry had been taken, though a diamond pin stood in the center of the pin-cushion.

Certainly, the Red Rajah robbed like a prince, not like a pickpocket.

Claude put on a belt, with a pair of revolvers, slung his trusty Winchester rifle at his back, and lighted a lantern.

Then he called the doctor and Ismail, and the three sallied forth to the stable. The doctor carried a dark lantern, which he kept closed by Claude's advice. When they got near the stable they again saw the tiger. The doctor flashed his lantern in the beast's face, and the three raised a howl, which scared it away a second time. So they reached the stable in safety, opened the door and entered.

The long stable, so commodious, nay, luxurious in its arrangements, was empty. There were sixteen stalls, and not a horse in one of them.

"Where's the Mankiller, Ismail?" asked Peyton. "You said they had not taken him."

"No more they did," the boy averred. "I heard them talking about him to the Sahib, and he told them not to bother with him; they could not spare the time, he said. So they left him in the loose box at the end of the stable."

Claude proceeded accordingly to the loose box at the end, and opened the door. When he looked in, he started back with surprise. The outer door of the loose box was open, and the same identical tiger was looking in at the horse. The stallion was crouched up in a corner of the box, trembling violently, and glaring at the tiger, wild with terror. Involuntarily Claude leveled the pistol he carried in his hand, and fired at the tiger. The bullet missed, but the flash scared the animal for the third time, and he disappeared. Claude went up to the horse.

Mankiller was a noted Tartar in the stable, and among Ma's grooms. Claude had heard of his kicking a *ryce*, or groom, to death, and tearing another with his teeth. But

the horse's spirit was quite subdued with terror, now. He allowed the Virginian to pat and soothe him, and lead him out of the loose box into the stable. He was only too glad of human companionship.

Claude saddled and bridled the stallion without difficulty, armed himself with a heavy whip and sharp spurs, and prepared to set out on his dangerous ride.

Sallying out, he found the moon just rising, and, accompanied by the doctor and Ismail, went toward the house. Mankiller kept close to him. The horse had been completely scared by the appearance of the tiger at the open door.

"Now, doctor," said the Virginian, at the porch, "I must bid you farewell. Keep the house close till morning. Good-by."

He turned the head of the Arab stallion, dug in the spurs, and flew off along the jungle path at full speed. He did not dare to ride slow. The roars of numerous tigers convinced him that he must do his best to get to the high-road unscathed.

Mankiller seconded his efforts, wild with terror. He tore along at such a pace that the trees seemed to whiz by. In half a minute he had reached the highway, and was rushing along it, at full speed, toward the distant lights of Singapore.

It was not more than eight o'clock yet, Peyton remembered, and most of the people would be up. Mankiller went magnificently, never abating his speed in the least for more than two miles; and after that the spur and whip kept him to his work, till he was close to Singapore. When at last Claude rode into the streets of the city, the vice was gone from Mankiller—driven out by excessive fatigue.

Peyton rode up to the Governor's house, and sent in word that he must see his excellency.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BLOODHOUND.

His excellency the Governor could hardly believe his ears, when he heard the American's story. What? The Red Rajah, a mere Malay piratical rover, to beard the representatives of insulted England! Carry off a British merchant from under the British flag! The Governor was astounded at his audacity!

Then Claude told of the false Don Gregorio, and the way in which he had fooled every one, and the Governor made use of some very strong language regarding the aforesaid don.

"Why, sir, he brought a letter to me from the Governor of Manila, the viceroy of all the Philippines, recommending this Don Gregorio as a polished gentleman—and so, by Jove, he was. I sat and chatted with him for an hour at least. Splendidly read man! And to think that the blackguard should be nothing but a Malay pirate, after all."

"He's no Malay, Governor," said Peyton, decisively. "The man's a European who has got control over the natives in some way, a sort of bad Rajah Brooke. What's to be done?"

"That's the rub," said Sir Thomas Roberts. "The infernal villain has chosen his time well. All the squadron is away but the guardship, and she's a clumsy old tub, not fit to go to sea."

"Then I must get to sea myself, in the captured prahu," said Peyton, decisively. "She's the only thing that can come up with him. I have one of the large Gatling guns aboard, and all I want is a crew, provisions and ammunition. If your excellency will give me a detail from the crew of the Thunderbolt, I will wager to come up with the fellow at last."

But his excellency could not see this. He had no objection to sending an officer in command of a detail, but he could not put British sailors under the command of an American.

So Claude was forced to depend on himself for his expedition.

He went down to the harbor to look for the prahu. He found her still there, under the charge of a half-dozen Malay sailors. They told him that the strange prahu-yacht had hauled out and run out to sea, about four o'clock in the afternoon, openly joining a fleet of ten or twelve large prahus of the same appearance; and that all of them steered eastward, right in the track of the squadron that left in the morning.

It was too late that night to do any thing. Claude had determined to trust to his own resources and those of the merchants of Singapore. He put up the horse at a livery stable for the night, and retired to the prahu himself.

In the morning he started out to see the different merchants in regard to his expedition. Imagine his astonishment, when he found that "The Palms" was not the only villa that had suffered on the night previous.

Blathers and McGrowl, Skinner and Biggs, each of these houses had suffered the loss of their senior partner, carried off in dead of night from his villa.

In each of their counting-rooms was found a notice, much of the same purport as that which had been left at Mr. Earle's.

Three hundred thousand pounds altogether was demanded for a ransom, to be left in a certain spot specified, within three weeks, on pain of death to the hostages. The spot mentioned, was on a small island to the north of Gilolo, and the money was to be in gold.

Each notice contained a warning against treachery, which would be infallibly found out.

There was of course intense excitement throughout Singapore, when this news spread, as it did with marvelous rapidity.

There was no question of paying the ransom. Claude was begged to go out after the pirate at once. Provisions and water, with abundance of ammunition, both for the Gatling gun and the small-arms, was hustled on board the swift prahu in short order. Sailors from every ship in the harbor were offered by their captains, but Claude chose to have none but Americans, on whom he could rely.

Before eleven o'clock in the forenoon, so great was the exertion used, Claude Peyton sailed out of the harbor on the captured prahu, ready for action. He had a crew of forty American sailors, many of them old men-of-war's men. Each of them carried a brace of navy revolvers and a cutlass, besides a breech-loading rifle.

On its pivot, in the center of the connecting platform between the two boats, grinned the formidable one-inch Gatling gun, the most murderous implement of destruction known to modern warfare.

The prahu was christened "Bloodhound," and swift and stanch was she, as her prototype.

A fine breeze was blowing, when the Bloodhound went skimming out of Singapore harbor, cutting the waves like a knife. Peyton trod the deck with proud confidence. He knew that he was on board the swiftest vessel of the pirate fleet, one capable of outsailing any thing afloat, except, perhaps, the Rajah's yacht.

The Bloodhound had evidently been used as a dispatch boat by the pirates, for her model was so keen and her framing so light that she could not have stood the recoil of a gun of any size. But the admirable qualities of the Gatling gun rendered it particularly fitted for use on such a vessel, sending a stream of heavy bullets, with little more recoil than that of a heavy duck gun. So that Claude felt perfectly at ease in the event of a battle with the pirates.

As soon as he was out of the harbor he directed his course to the north-east, up the Straits of Malacca. He felt sure that the Rajah would make for Pondicherry first. Why, he could hardly explain. But it was the home of Marguerite, and he had an idea that the Rajah would take her there.

"If he had not promised to do so," thought Claude, "the child would hardly have kept his secret for him. He has deceived her in some manner, or she would not have gone with him."

With these thoughts he directed the head of the prahu to be laid straight up the center of the Malacca Channel.

speaking, having rescued her from shipwreck, and protected her ever since.

This young lady proved to be the daughter of the Marquis de Favannes, whose loss at sea, some two years previous, had been so mysterious. Her aunt, Madame de Choiseul, was a second cousin of the Governor's wife, and had resided at Pondicherry for many years.

What arguments the baron had used the Governor did not know, and he shrugged his shoulders with the true French grimace.

"You know, monsieur, how it is. Madame de Choiseul is poor and noble. This baron was a millionaire. Any way, he prevailed upon her to depart with him, and they went yesterday morning. You seem to be very anxious to see them, monsieur."

When Claude had told him the whole history, the Governor was surprised beyond measure. To think that such a polite man, such a perfect gentleman should be a pirate! The Governor was amazed! He was desolated with grief at the fate of his friend, Madame de Choiseul. As for the demoiselle, he supposed that she must have become attached to this pirate. *Ma foi!* he was a splendid fellow.

Claude did not stay longer at Pondicherry than to pay his visit to the Governor. He weighed anchor on receipt of the news, and started for the Straits of Sunda. He felt sure that the Rajah would go back to his old haunts.

But he passed through the straits, skirted the shores of Borneo, and sailed up to the Soo-loo Islands, and yet heard no tidings of the missing ones.

He arrived in the midst of the haunts of the pirates, and found every place deserted. The ashes of the different villages showed the track of the squadron, which had departed some time before. It had accomplished its mission on land, but where was its enemy on the sea?

Claude overhauled every trading-junk or prahu he met, but no one had seen any thing of the pirates. For once, in a long period of time, the Malay seas were safe. With the disappearance of the Red Rajah peace seemed to have settled everywhere.

Claude hunted the seas over for several weeks, to no purpose, till it struck him as wise to proceed to the rendezvous, or place where the pirate chief had ordered the ransoms to be sent.

When he was nearing Gilolo, he descried several white sails on the horizon, which he gladly recognized as those of the men of war.

In a very few hours he was in the midst of the squadron, and in some danger of being sunk.

The men of war fired several shots at him to bring him to, thinking him to be one of the pirates, and it was not until the prahu had been boarded by a boat from the French steamer "Charlemagne," that Claude succeeded in proving his identity.

He found the squadron strengthened by the arrival of the frigate "Comanche," Captain Pendleton, under orders to cruise after pirates, in conjunction with the English, French, and Dutch vessels.

From Pendleton Claude learned what luck the squadron had had. They had found the piratical islands entirely deserted, without a vestige of any thing living, the houses in the villages standing empty.

They had fired all these, and destroyed the rice crops, when Pendleton arrived from Singapore to join them, bringing the news of the Rajah's audacious raid on that place. They were all ordered to wait and cruise around Gilolo, to pounce upon any of the pirates who should venture near the place after the ransom.

Claude could do nothing better than stay with them. His fleet vessel was admirably adapted for an outlying scout to the squadron, and was so employed. A signal midshipman, with the necessary rockets, was detailed to attend the Bloodhound, in case of seeing the enemy, to inform the fleet.

But in vain did the squadron cruise around Gilolo. Not a sign of the sharp lateen sails was to be seen. On the third day after Claude's arrival, the distant smoke of a steamer was visible, coming toward them. She proved to be the opium packet "Thunderbolt," with letters from Singapore.

The letters caused universal excitement and consternation.

The mysterious Red Rajah had been at Singapore again, or else had agents there. The *right ears* of two of the captive Singapore merchants had been found in the letter-box of the Governor's house, with letters from the unhappy gentle-

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CLUE FOUND.

In due course of time the Bloodhound hove in sight of Pondicherry, where she created quite a sensation. Peyton bore letters to the Governor, and learned from him that his suspicions were correct.

A strange millionaire, in a yacht of most splendid appearance, and unusual rig, had come to the town, representing himself as a rich planter from Java.

He bore letters from the Governor of Batavia, representing him as Baron Cortlandt, and had with him a very beautiful young lady, whom he introduced as his ward, so to

men themselves. They implored their partners to pay the ransom quickly, as the notices directed. They entreated them not to try and fight the Rajah, who was all-powerful, as they, the writers, would have to suffer the penalty.

Annexed to these was a proclamation from the Rajah himself.

He announced that in three days more the left ears of the captives would be sent, unless the ransom was on its way to the appointed spot; and so on, successively, till the whole of their bodies should have been cut piecemeal.

The mysterious sending of this dispatch had dreadfully surprised the merchants. They had come to the conclusion to pay the ransom at once, and take their chances of capturing the pirates who came after it.

To this end they had taken up a subscription among all the principal inhabitants of the place, and dispatched three hundred thousand pounds in gold in the Thunderbolt, to be landed at the island and left on the beach.

There was great indignation among the captains of the men of war when the "cowardly surrender," as they called it, of the Singapore merchants was known. They had expected a fight, instead of which, money was to release the captives.

Orders arrived from the commander-in-chief at Singapore to leave Gilolo and come back, and the English and French vessels obeyed the orders of their representatives. The Comanche was the only vessel left on the station, for the merchants had sent a peremptory recall to the "Avenger," in which Claude had come there first. But Peyton himself, with the Bloodhound, was independent. He had determined to cruise about till he found the Red Rajah and rescued Marguerite, if it took him years. Her last words as heard by Ismail: "I do not love you any more. You have deceived me again," still rung in his ears. He was resolved to stay there.

The sensation of cruising in a swift prahu, able to overhaul any thing in the way, was delightful. Claude scoured the Celebes sea all day and all night, and next morning was gladdened with the sight of the clumsy mat sails of a Chinese junk, with a strange prahu close to her.

When the look-out, perched on the end of the lofty lateen yard, gave warning of this fact, it was just dawn of day.

Peyton rushed out of the little deck cabin and gave an involuntary shout of joy. There was no mistaking the cut of the other's sails. She was a piratical prahu, low and black, with enormous spread of yard. The two vessels were about a mile off, and alongside of each other. There was very little wind, and what there was, was dead astern of the Bloodhound, which was slipping through the water at about eight knots an hour.

Peyton went forward and watched the vessels, while his men were tumbling up to quarters.

The Bloodhound cut through the water with such rapidity, that two minutes more would have brought her up to the enemy; when the crew of the strange prahu suddenly seemed to perceive her, for that vessel parted company with the junk and sailed out.

It was evidently the pirate's intention to fight. Peyton could see the crew mustering on the bamboo fighting-deck. They were the men he was in search of, in their scarlet sarongs and jackets, armed with spears, muskets, and krisses.

Claude Peyton rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Now I have you, scoundrels!" he muttered, and the Bloodhound rushed fiercely to the contest. The stranger was a large, heavy prahu with an outrigger, but by no means of the swift and graceful build of the Bloodhound.

That the latter was recognized as an enemy was evident from the vengeful yells of the Malays.

Now the Bloodhound was within a quarter of a mile of the enemy when down went the pirate's masts and sails. The Malays always fight under bare poles, using their sweeps.

Then the strange prahu yawed, and fired a broadside from four *lehus* or brass swivel guns, full at the Bloodhound. The grape and canister came crushing and tearing through the slight buiwarks of the little vessel, and tore her foresail considerably, besides wounding several men.

Claude held on his course without firing a shot till within two hundred yards of the pirates, when he hove to.

His turn had come.

The terrible mitrailleuse was trained full upon the pirates, and the storm of balls went crushing through the defenses of the strange prahu, a rain of death pouring on the unhappy Malays. At such a short range the mitrailleuse does its ghastly work to perfection. Peyton trained the piece and veered it from side to side, while two of his men turned

the crank and poured in cartridges. From the moment he opened his fire, not a shot was returned from the pirates. The storm of death was too pitiless and unceasing to be faced. The Malays had expected an easy victory. They found an all-powerful and implacable foe. In two minutes the fighting deck was cleared of its occupants, those who were left alive leaping overboard with yells of terror. The oars were deserted in another minute. No living man could stand to his work amid such a hail of bullets. The victory was complete and decisive, and three cheers from the Americans proclaimed it, as they filled their foresail and swept down once more upon the deserted craft.

The water was full of swimmers trying to escape. Claude tried to save some of them, but the effort was vain. So implacable is the ferocity of a Malay pirate that he prefers death to safety at the hands of his enemy. Several of the sailors who tried to pull their enemies out of the water experienced severe wounds from the latter, the desperate wretches striking at them with their krisses as they grasped them.

Such is Malay nature. It rushes on death with eagerness, but flees from its guns under a heavy fire. It desires only tangible revenge, and prefers the kriss to the musket.

Claude was compelled to let them all drown, while he boarded the prahu. He found her full of dead and dying Malays. Here the same implacable spirit manifested itself. Men at the last gasp from loss of blood crawled like snakes across the deck to stab at the American sailors. In self-defense they were obliged to shoot all the wounded and cast them overboard with the dead.

Huddled up in the corner of the cabin they found a woman, who proved easier to deal with. When Claude had assured her in Malay that she was safe, her gratitude was boundless.

She was a slave, she said, a captive from a Chinese junk who had been assigned the property of the chief in command of the prahu just taken.

Claude questioned her closely as to the whereabouts of the Red Rajah. She informed him that they had left the fleet only three days before, off the island of Gilolo, where the Rajah had been cruising to watch the movements of the great fire prahus of the white man.

"Every night he used to sail close in," she told him, "to count the numbers of the enemy; and when the 'Burong' (the prahu just taken) left, there was strong talk of attacking the ship left alone, now that the others had gone."

"I hope they will do it," said Claude, when he heard the news. "This Red Rajah will learn a lesson, if he tries to attack Pendleton. Come, Mr. Scott, we must be off now. Take half of the men and this captured vessel and we'll sail for Gilolo."

"Hadn't we better examine yonder junk first?" said Tom Scott, the mate of the Bloodhound.

"You are right, Scott. We may have some money aboard that belongs to the owner, if I'm not mistaken."

They soon overhauled the junk, and found on board Lipopong, a Canton merchant, who had been compelled to pay a heavy ransom for his son Pong-chew. Lipopong was quite wonderstruck with the terrible execution of the Gatling gun. When told that he could have his money back by searching for it in the Burong he was still more surprised. He did not believe that such disinterestedness was possible.

"Illustrious prince," he said, with many genuflections, "it is easy to see that you are a child of heaven. Any one else would have taken the money for himself, and left poor Lipopong to be satisfied with his son regained. Most illustrious prince! Most noble emperor!"

And Lipopong wallowed on the deck in a transport of gratitude and respect.

From him Claude procured twenty Chinese sailors, whom he placed on board the captured prahu, under command of Tom Scott, with ten Americans, to help him control them and work the ship.

Then the Bloodhound and the Burong spread their sails, and shot away over the sparkling sea toward Gilolo. They had not far to go. The Burong proved to be an excellent sailor, although not so fast as the Bloodhound, and by daylight next morning they had arrived at their old station.

No Comanche was visible.

Claude sailed about all day in vain search. He passed by the little rocky islet where the ransom of the merchants was exposed. To his surprise there it still lay, a little pile of bags on a rock, with a white flag fluttering above it.

Puzzled to make out the whereabouts of the ship, he determined to sail around the island in a wide circle till he should find traces of her. With a look-out at the masthead, he cruised till dark. Just as the sun set, the distant boom of a heavy gun came across the waters from the east.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A GOOD FIGHT.

At the sound of that gun Claude started and hurrahed. The crew of the Bloodhound followed his example, catching the enthusiasm of the moment.

"The Comanche! The Comanche!" was the cry, and a second deep report confirmed their suspicions.

Claude ran up alongside of the Burong, which he instructed to follow as close as she could. Then crowding all sail on the Bloodhound, he turned his course eastward, and sailed toward the sounds. As the darkness came on the wind rose, blowing a stiff ten-knot breeze from the west. The prahu was at her best point of sailing, wing and wing, and skimmed along at a tremendous pace.

The guns could still be heard ahead of them, and the red flashes could be seen, which lighted up the heavens to the eastward, every now and then. Casting the log, Peyton found that he was going eighteen knots an hour, nearly as fast as a North River steamer.

Inside of half an hour, the flashes became plainly visible. They came from several places. The reports, sometimes of heavy guns, at others of lighter pieces, showed that a battle was going on.

Who could it be between, except the Comanche and the Red Rajah?

The prahu seemed to fly through the waters, and yet she went too slow for Claude's impatience.

He paced the deck excitedly, longing to come up with the combatants, praying for more wind all the time. The wind, as if in answer to his prayer, seemed to grow fiercer. As swift and tireless as the animal whose name she bore, the Bloodhound rushed on. Most men would have taken in reefs, for it was blowing quite a gale. Peyton kept every stitch of canvas set, and threw water on the sails to make them hold the wind better.

He kept throwing the log every five minutes, and had the satisfaction of finding that he was going nineteen knots and a half at last.

He was too eagerly employed in watching ahead to notice any thing to starboard or port. He could see the flashes quite plainly now, and the canvas of a large frigate, which he recognized as the Comanche, under close-reefed topsails, and going free. She was firing shots, every now and then, into the midst of a fleet of prahus, that scudded before her like a flock of sheep.

But, unlike the sheep, the prahus were fighting. Claude counted flashes from ten different places; and as he drew nearer could see that they were fighting under sail, an unusual thing for Malays.

The shots from the frigate appeared to be of little effect. The night was dark, the sea heavy. Shooting accurately was an impossibility, for either side; but the pirates had the largest mark to shoot at. Their ordnance was light, being made up of long brass three-pound guns on swivels, known as *lelas*. Still, the number of the pieces, each prahu carrying four or six, and their low position in the water, rendered them very annoying to the large ship.

The Bloodhound bore down into the midst of this strife just as the clouds cleared away from the moon, taking the squall with them.

Peyton found himself within a quarter of a mile of the Comanche when the wind fell to a light breeze. He saw the pirates begin to draw away from the large frigate as the breeze fell. The moon illuminated the scene with a flood of silver, across which came the red flashes of the guns once more. Claude could see clearly now. The pirates had been fighting under close-reefed canvas, and keeping very near to the ship. When the moon shone out, and the squall ceased, they crowded all sail to get away. They had no relish for a square fight in smooth water.

Peyton could see the sailors swarming over the yards of the Comanche, and a cloud of sail descended all over the ship a moment after. He let off a rocket, and his men gave three cheers. They were answered from the Comanche, and the pirates uttered a tremendous yell.

Now the Bloodhound overhauled the frigate rapidly, passing her almost as if she were standing still, and dashed into the midst of the pirates.

Just at that moment another cloud swept over the face of the moon.

The wind rose rapidly into a second squall, in the midst of which frigate and prahus rushed madly through the seething foam, too busy in looking to their spars to fire at each other. When the squall had passed over, Claude found himself driven half a mile to leeward of the frigate, and some distance in front of the pirates themselves. He wore short round, and hove to, to await the assault that was inevitable.

He had not many minutes to wait, when down came the pirates in a clump, as if intending to run him down. Claude filled his foresail and stood off along the front of their line, till they were within about a quarter of a mile, when he opened fire with the Gatling gun. He was answered by the crashing of shot through the bulwarks of the Bloodhound, and down came his mainsail in a mass of ruin on deck.

But the fall of the mainsail did not prevent the working of the machine gun. As accurately as if nothing was the matter, it continued to grind out its fearful rain of bullets and shells, crashing through bulwarks, tearing through crowds of Malays, and carrying death where it went.

The pirate fleet, as if by one consent, swerved to one side, and dashed past the disabled Bloodhound, not caring to provoke a closer acquaintance with her.

Claude ceased firing as soon as they had passed, and set to work to repair damages.

The fall of the mainsail was easily accounted for. Instead of a mast, a prahu carries a triangle of timber resting on blocks under the bulwarks. This triangle sustains the lateen yard under its apex, and is hauled up or down by strong ropes. One of these ropes had been cut by shot, which brought down mast and yard together by the run.

This damage was soon repaired, but other injuries were more serious. Several three-pound shot, and a quantity of broken iron, had struck the Bloodhound, shattering the thin bamboo bulwarks, and knocking several holes in her timbers below, which were framed of teak. One of the holes was between wind and water, and cost some trouble to stop it; so that when the Bloodhound hoisted her mainsail once more to continue her course, the pirates were well to leeward, and the Comanche was abeam and passing them.

Claude looked astern for the Burong. She was about half a mile off, and coming up with the Comanche, which the pirates were leaving. It became evident that the Bloodhound was the only vessel capable of coming up with the pirates and rescuing Marguerite, if it was to be done. True, she was too slightly built to stand much of a fight, but then the Comanche was sure to be up in time to help her if she was in danger of sinking.

Claude placed his hopes on disabling the largest of the prahus and capturing it, in the hope that it might contain the Rajah. He could see no signs, however, of the white sails of the splendid yacht. The fact made him suspect that the Rajah had hidden his prisoners somewhere else.

While he was pacing the deck, occupied with these reflections, he noticed that the Comanche was beginning to creep up to him, even in the light wind that had taken the place of the squalls.

A train of smoke and sparks from the frigate explained the reason of this. The Comanche had got up her steam at last. She had been cruising under canvas when the battle commenced, and it took some time to light the fires, and get the boilers hot.

But now Claude exulted. He himself was coming up with the enemy, and the Comanche was coming up with him, by the assistance of steam.

They kept on their course for half an hour, during which they had both crept up to within about five hundred yards of the pirates.

Then, once more, the Comanche began to fire her nine-inch rifle on the forecastle.

With smooth water, and a light breeze, the practice was excellent. The very first shot struck one of the pirates full in the stern, traversing the entire length, and knocking a hole into her bow, or rather out of it, as big as a small dining-table.

In an instant she began to sink, amid a wild wail from the devoted crew. The other prahus stood on, leaving the unhappy ones to their fate.

Now the Bloodhound opened fire on the next prahu, send-

ing a stream of balls into her cabin windows, each one in the same place, till the affrighted crew, stricken with superstitious terror, leaped into the sea on all sides.

The victory seemed to be sure, when a shout arose from the prahu; and the whole fleet, now reduced to eight, turned round on their track and hove to, to fight. They seemed to be aware of the impossibility of escape.

The first intimation that Claude received of their intentions was a broadside of three-pound shot, that came crashing through the sides of the Bloodhound, and in one single moment reduced her to a helpless wreck, rapidly sinking. The pirates yelled with triumph as they saw the sails come tumbling down, and realized that their troublesome antagonist was out of the fight.

But, long before she sunk, the Burong had arrived alongside, and the crew were transferred to her, along with the Gatling gun, hastily hauled aboard.

By the time this was done, however, the pirates were all round the Comanche, grappled to her and trying to board.

The great ship stood on her course steadily and majestically, and looked as if she could annihilate her pigmy opponents. But they were far more dangerous than she had given them credit for.

Close alongside, and out of the reach of her guns, they retained their grappling-hooks firmly in the frigate's chains. Evidently they understood how to foul a screw, for a sail was dropped overboard, which very quickly was sucked in by the propeller, and so entangled in it as to render the machine useless.

They kept up an incessant fire on the port-holes with small-arms, and made repeated attempts to board. But the fire of revolvers from the Comanche's crew became so heavy that again and again they fell back.

What might have been the end of the contest there is no telling, had not the rescued Gatling gun on the Burong again come into play.

It was the first thing transferred to the prahu, along with two chests of ammunition, Peyton well knowing its importance at the present time. The Bloodhound sunk in fifty fathoms, full of provisions and water, but the terrible mitrailleuse was saved. And now it came into use, only too opportunely.

The Malays, on the starboard side of the Comanche, assailed by a perfect tempest of balls and shells, were swept away in a moment. They fell as if struck by lightning, in a line of dead and dying men. The few who remained leaped into the sea, to avoid the shower, and four prahus were cleared.

The Burong tacked across the Comanche's stern, and sent a second stream of balls into the mass of yelling combatants clustered on the tall side of the frigate.

Again was the scene repeated. Again the storm of death swept over the pirates, driving them into the sea as the most merciful of the two.

The tall ship and her tiny tender remained victors in the strife, and the pirates were swimming for their lives. But the victory had been won at a heavy cost. The fleet of the Red Rajah was annihilated, but the Burong only held fifteen unwounded Americans. Twenty-five had been killed outright or desperately maimed, from the last fire of the pirate fleet.

Claude Peyton was so anxious that he could not wait for the frigate's crew to take possession of her prizes. He dashed alongside and boarded the prahu, rushing from one to another in search of the prisoners he expected to find hidden away there. Pendleton sent a detail of sailors to take charge of the prahu, but nothing was found on board to indicate the presence of prisoners, only dead and dying Malay and Dyak warriors, grim and ferocious to the last, with a few female slaves, the mistresses of the chiefs.

From these they learned what Peyton had suspected before, that the Red Rajah was not in the fleet. It was only a portion of his squadron sent to attack the Comanche and draw off her attention while the Rajah himself proceeded to the rock where lay the ransom.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE YACHT.

THE two friends agreed to man a portion of the prizes with sailors from the frigate, and formed a fleet to cruise after their former owner. They spent the most of the night

in the necessary preparations, and in the morning the fleet was ready to start.

How far they had drifted during the fight they did not yet know. Neither course nor reckoning had been noted in the excitement. When morning came they found themselves entangled among the maze of low coral reefs that forms the eastern barrier of the Malay Archipelago, with a strong current setting easterly and driving them on the rocks.

To add to their perplexity the wind was very light, and the screw of the propeller was found to be so hopelessly fouled with the sail which the pirates had dropped into the water, that it would be a work of several hours to cut it loose, and in the mean time their steam engine was useless.

There was nothing for it but to beat out of the surrounding shoals under sail, and wait till they were out of danger to free the screw. They had drifted into a sea of shoals as yet unsurveyed, and which they had much difficulty in getting out of.

At last, about noon, they had the satisfaction of seeing the shoals to the south and east left astern, while the only remaining one was a long reef to the north that stretched as a barrier for several miles ahead.

Then it was that the look-out at the frigate's main top-gallant cross-trees shouted:

"Sail, ho! A prahu on the starboard bow!"

Pendleton himself scampered up the rigging, glass in hand, to inspect the stranger.

The vessel was on the port tack, with four of the swiftest prahus following her, headed by the Burong, with her redoubtable mitrailleuse. The rest of the prizes had been burnt or scuttled.

The wind was dead in their teeth, and the strange prahu was coming down before it on the other side of the barrier reef before mentioned. Both parties were approaching each other rapidly. The captain watched the prahu keenly, till he heard a voice beside him, exclaiming:

"The Rajah, by all the powers!"

Pendleton looked round. Claude Peyton stood on the cross-trees beside him, holding on by a stay, and gazing eagerly at the stranger.

"See, Horace!" he ejaculated, "it is she! The very self-same yacht, all white and gold, and so swift and beautiful, that lay in the harbor at Singapore. And by heavens! Look close! Now you can see him plain. It's the man himself, that audacious villain, the Red Rajah!"

Indeed it was true. The lovely yacht, all white and gold, with snowy sails of fine duck, was dashing along on the other side of the barrier-reef, swift as a sea-gull.

Even while they looked, they could see the tall, slight figure of the Rajah, in his full Malay dress of scarlet and gold. He was standing on the quarter-deck of one of the twin boats composing his prahu-yacht, smoking a cigar, and close enough for them to see his face plainly, with a first-rate glass.

Pendleton shouted down to the deck:

"Ready the fore-castle gun, there! Give the impudent villain a shot! Hurry, now!"

The order was obeyed in a twinkling. The great gun was cast loose and pointed.

There was a flash, and a heavy report.

The nine-inch shell went skipping over the waves, and burst into fragments with a loud explosion, as it struck the coral reef. It was aimed too low.

Pendleton swore a great oath.

The Red Rajah lifted his hand, and waved it in a mocking adieu.

Then Claude Peyton swore louder than the other.

A female figure had come out of the yacht's cabin and stood by the Rajah.

It was Marguerite.

Claude felt sick with jealousy and anguish as he saw her, and saw the Rajah putting his arm around her, caressingly.

CHAPTER XXV.

WILL-O'-THE-WISP.

CAPTAIN PENDLETON shouted angrily to "load up and try another shot," when Claude interfered.

"Heavens, Pendleton!" he cried; "don't you see who is on board? It is Mademoiselle de Favannes! You may kill her if you fire."

Pendleton acquiesced in the observation.

"Avast there with that gun!" he ordered. "Secure the piece."

Then he and Claude consulted on what should be done. The ship was increasing her distance every minute from the yacht, and it became quite plain that by the time they had rounded the reef that intervened between them, the "Bonita" would be out of sight.

"We must let her go," said Claude, assentingly, to the other's propositions. "We must go to the island of the ransom, and see if the fellows have performed their promise of returning the prisoners."

So the two friends sadly descended the rigging, and passed the rest of the day in beating up to Ransom Island.

They arrived there about sunset, and found that the ubiquitous Rajah had been there, as they had expected. A small tent was pitched on the barren rocks, and around it were grouped the unhappy merchants, who had been captured by the Red Rajah. They were well provided with food and water, and otherwise had been well treated, but they were full of indignation and terror.

Claude sympathized with them all, and especially with Messrs. Blathers and Skinner, each of whom had his head tied up, where his right ear had been cut off by the Rajah's orders, to expedite the ransom. Mr. Earle was uninjured, as also his daughter, Julia, whom they discovered, somewhat to Peyton's surprise, with her father. Claude had never expected that the sanguinary pirate would have spared her.

But he had done so, and the Earles had a strange tale to tell.

"They had been carried away," Julia said, "to the creek that divides Singapore Island from the wild jungly mainland. Here they found a fleet of twelve prahus, similar to the Bonita, Don Gregorio's yacht. Where these prahus had been hidden during the Rajah's visit was a mystery, but probably in one of the numerous wild creeks in the neighborhood. At all events they were put on board one of the prahus, along with Mademoiselle Marguerite, who would not leave Julia. They sailed away around the island quite openly, without seeming to attract any attention, and outside the harbor were joined by the Bonita, which came out to meet them from her moorings. They were unmolested from the forts, the garrison of which probably took them for Malay traders.

"Julia, her father, and Marguerite, were compelled to follow the Rajah on board the Bonita, and were treated with the utmost politeness. They sailed away to the north-west, and next morning found themselves all alone in the sea. The prahu that followed had disappeared.

"They sailed on for the whole of the next day, and at night sighted some islands, which they passed, and next day were in the midst of the Bay of Bengal, or the North Indian Ocean. They must have gone at a tremendous pace, for on the fourth day they were in sight of Pondicherry, a distance of over twelve hundred miles from Singapore.

"During the passage," Julia said, "the Rajah and Marguerite rarely conversed. She seemed to be angry at him, he sullen and reserved. It appeared that Marguerite had begged hard at Singapore, for the Rajah to release the merchant and his daughter; but the latter had refused.

"Now, when in sight of Pondicherry, the two had a violent dispute, in which they spoke only the Malay language, so that Julia could not understand them. At last the girl ran to the side of the vessel, and actually leaped overboard. What happened afterward was all confusion. The child sunk twice, and the Rajah himself leaped overboard after her. The sharks were so plentiful and voracious, that there was much difficulty in saving them, and the child was brought on board at last, apparently dead. The Rajah behaved like an insane man, tearing his hair and uttering wild ejaculations in *English*. At last the child opened her eyes, and the scene was very touching. The savage warrior melted into tears, and they talked together in French for some time. Julia did not catch all they said, as she was confined to her cabin by the crew at the commencement of the scene; but the Rajah appeared to be promising her something, at which she smiled, and appeared satisfied, for she put her arms round his neck and kissed him."

(Claude ground his teeth when he heard this.)

"What happened at Pondicherry I do not know," pursued Julia. "That evening we went into the port, and my father and myself were put down below, and closely confined. We were not let up on deck for two days, and when we came up at last, the Bonita was again out at sea, and it was evening. A large prahu was alongside, one of the fleet we had left behind us. We were hastily transferred to it, and sailed

away, in company with the Bonita. We found poor Mr. Blathers and Mr. Skinner on board. Where they took us after that, I do not know. We sailed about, sometimes without the fleet, sometimes with the Bonita, till last night, when we heard heavy cannonading. Then they took down our sails, and rowed all night, till they landed us here in the morning, and here you have found us."

"But when were these two gentlemen mutilated in that manner?" asked Claude, pointing to poor Skinner's head.

"The Rajah came on board one day, and ordered my father and me below, and we heard cries on deck. When we came up, we found these gentlemen had been treated as you see. They told us that they had been compelled to write letters to their partners, on the subject of their ransoms. The Rajah threatened to cut them to pieces if they did not do it.

"We were allowed to see Marguerite last night, that is to say, I was. I forgot to tell you that my maid, Surya, was with me till then, attending and dressing me, as she used to. But yesterday night she was taken from me, and sent to attend Marguerite. I found the poor child very glad to see me, and she told me that the Rajah had consented to set me free. At first, you know, he was going to establish a harem, the wretch, of which I was to be an ornament. But she persuaded him to yield to her, and, in requital, she had promised to marry him."

Claude had a hard struggle to control himself here.

"While we were talking," continued Julia, "an old lady came into the cabin, who was introduced as Madame de Choiseul, Marguerite's aunt. She was very deaf, and asked me once, 'Was not Monsieur le Comte a man magnificent, a man glorious?' When I answered that I did not know him, she did not hear me, but went on praising this generous count, who was to make her old age happy and marry her niece, Marguerite, and how they were to live somewhere, I could not catch where, for at that moment the chief devil came in—the Rajah I mean. He looked like a devil for a moment, I tell you, when he saw the old lady and heard her prattle. But the next minute he was as cool and courteous as ever, and advanced to me, saying that it was time to depart. Marguerite cried, but the old lady did not seem to understand. He explained to her that I had come from another vessel, which was going back, and so I came away.

"He must have deceived Marguerite, for she evidently thought I was set free on her account. But I was not, for papa tells me that it has cost us an immense sum of money."

"How did this Rajah take leave of you?" asked Captain Pendleton at this juncture.

"With perfect politeness. He asked if the old lady had told me any thing of his future plans, but I assured him she had not, and he seemed to be satisfied. Just before he left me, which was on this island, in front of this tent, he said to me: 'You may thank the power of innocence in that child, Miss Earle, that has preserved you from harm. If it had not been for her, you would have stayed in the fleet, after your father's ransom was paid. You were not included in it. Henceforth you will hear no more of the Red Rajah. He leaves these seas forever.'"

"What does that mean, I wonder?" said Claude.

"I suppose the blackguard has determined to retire to the shades of private life," returned Pendleton. "And, indeed, if he can keep all the money he has made to himself, he will have a very respectable fortune. Well, we must be after him. The screw will be in order by to-morrow morning."

During the night the crew of the Comanche were hard at work, clearing the screw of the thick folds of canvass in which it appeared to be inextricably entangled, and finally got it clear.

Then the Earles and their companions were put on board one of the captured prahus, to be sent to their homes at Singapore. Peyton took command of the best sailer of the lot, and bid farewell to Pendleton.

He was resolved to hunt out the Rajah, in the midst of the reefs among which the Bonita was doubtless threading her way; and with that object stood off to the east, leaving the Spice Islands in his wake.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEWS FROM HOME.

A YEAR after the events we have described in our story, Claude Peyton found himself in Calcutta, as far from the object of his search as ever. He had cruised among all the

islands of the Malaysia, and far out into the Pacific Ocean, but no sign of the terrible Red Rajah had he seen, since the day when he disappeared from view, with Marguerite by his side.

Where was she now, beautiful, innocent Marguerite? Had the Rajah kept his promise and married her? and where had they gone to? They had vanished from the Eastern world as completely as if they had never been.

Heart-sick and disappointed, with a weary pain at his heart that had never left him, the young Virginian sailed back to Calcutta. He passed through the heart of the Sooloo Sea, where the pirates had once held their court, and found it covered with peaceful traders. With the exit of the Red Rajah, peace returned to the seas, except near the coasts of Borneo and Celebes, where sneaking rowboat pirates still kept their haunts, to snap up unwary fishing-boats.

Claude did not stop at Singapore. He had not the heart. He was too gloomy about Marguerite's loss. He passed through the Straits of Malacca with a fair wind, and arrived at Calcutta.

Lying in the Hoogly was a frigate, recognized at once as the Comanche. Peyton ran alongside in his weather-beaten prahu; and was soon on board, and shaking hands with his old friend Pendleton.

The two had much to talk about, Claude to narrate his fruitless expedition, Pendleton to make a confession.

"Claude, old fellow," said the captain, with something very like a blush, "I'm going to leave the service. I've sent in my resignation, and as soon as it's accepted I leave here."

"Why, where on earth are you going, Horace?" asked Peyton, surprised.

"To Singapore," said the other. "The fact is, Claude—I—I'm going to be married to Miss Earle—you remember her?"

"To be sure I do."

"Yes, and we're going to live in Virginia. To be sure the father is somewhat objectionable, with his absent aspirates, but we shall not see him, and the lady herself is perfection, as you know."

"I congratulate you, Horace," said Claude, cordially. "As for me, I don't know what I shall do. I've found no trace of that villain, the Rajah, and poor little Marguerite is gone forever, I fear."

"Why don't you go back to the old plantation?" asked Pendleton. "It's over four years now since you have seen the old folks; and my father writes me word that they often talk about you there. By-the-by, there are some letters for you lying in the post-office here. The clerk told me that they had been there for over a month. One of them was directed in your father's handwriting."

"Indeed!" said Claude, eagerly. "Then I must go and get them at once. Good-by, Horace."

"Dine with me this evening—won't you?—at six," called out the captain, as the other left the cabin.

"All right. With pleasure, I mean," and Peyton bolted down the side-ladder as if he had been shot.

He was very anxious to hear from home. Pendleton's account stirred up all the tender memories of his boyhood. He thought of his father and mother, now growing old; of his lost brother, Clarence, whom he had not seen for so many years. Had Clarence come home, perhaps? He rushed to the post-office, and found several letters. Two he knew at sight to be bankers' advices, with remittances from home. The third was in his father's well-known hand, and he tore it open with impatience.

It was short, and referred to a previous letter, which the writer presumed he had received at Singapore. The last words electrified him:

"As I told you in my last letter that your brother Clarence had returned home, and that we were reconciled, you will not be surprised to hear that his marriage is to take place at Christmas. During his travels he has accumulated great wealth, and his bride is worthy of him. Come home quickly, Claude. We all long to see you, and none more than

"Your affectionate father,

"GEORGE H. PEYTON."

Claude was astounded.

His brother come home, and this the first he knew of it! How he wished he had stopped at Singapore! Then he would have understood it fully.

As it was, he had no time to lose. The steamer for Europe was going the next day, and he had only time to cash his remittances and take his passage, during the short business hours of Calcutta.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE END.

THE evening was deliciously mild and fine. The winter had been remarkably open and dry so far, and the roads were very tolerable still. No snow had fallen yet, to convert them into those terrible quagmires that have given Virginia mud a world-wide reputation. The fields were brown and bare, it is true; the forests leafless; but the warm sun-rays lay upon the wood-sides, and the quail piped among the stubble.

Flocks of wild ducks, high overhead, were winging their steady way southward through the blue sky, to find their rest in the distant marshes of South Carolina.

Every now and then, the distant report of a fowling-piece showed where some sportsman was at work, filling his game-bag.

Claude Peyton rode along the well-remembered road, by field and forest, his heart full of pleasant thoughts, mingled with a gentle sadness.

He was coming home. Home, with its sweet influences, was drawing nearer every moment. He should see his mother once more, and his dear old father, and that brother whom he only remembered as a boy.

Where had Clarence been all this time? and what was this mystery about him? The letter explained nothing. And what would he not have given could he but have known where Marguerite was! But she was gone from him forever. He should never see that graceful little figure again. She was lost to him, and in the clutches of a pirate, hidden away in some distant place in the East.

As he rode along, everything seemed to recall his boyhood. There was the wood where he and Clarence used to hunt rabbits, long ago. That tall blasted tree on the hill-top was the same one whence he and Clarence had taken the young hawks from their nest. How bold and handsome Clarence was! What a high temper he had! Claude remembered, as if it were yesterday, the quarrel between Clarence and his father, twenty-two years ago, now; and how the boy had ridden away from the house in a passion, declaring he never would come back.

Old Colonel Peyton had not believed the threat, but Clarence had fulfilled it. He had been tracked as far as Baltimore, when his father grew anxious at last, and hunted for him. But the clue was lost there. Whether he had gone to sea or not, no one knew; but they surmised as much; for a slaver had escaped from the port a week before, and it was rumored that a boy, answering Clarence's description, had gone in her.

When Colonel Peyton heard that, he forbid his son's name to be mentioned any more in the house. For a Peyton to be engaged in the slave-trade was a disgrace that he could not suffer. Claude had often wondered whether the rumor was true.

So the young man rode on, buried in various thoughts, till he arrived at the rounded highlands, among which the Rappahannock pursues its swift course. He drew rein at the corner of the winding road that led down to the ford, and spoke to one of the children who came out of the little cottage to stare at the strange gentleman. No one knew him.

"Who lives down at the ford there?" he asked of the eldest, a bright-looking mulatto boy of twelve.

The boy grinned all over his face.

"Dem as allus lived dere, I 'spec'," he observed.

"And who's that?" asked Claude. "You see I'm a stranger here."

"Why, Marse Peyton, to be sure," was the reply.

"Has any one arrived to see Mr. Peyton recently?" asked Claude.

"Do' know nuffin 'bout recently. Marse Clarence come home, 'bout six, seven, 'leven months ago. Marse Claude expeck home soon. Dar Marse Clarence, now, with his new wife, little French missy."

The sound of galloping hoofs struck Claude's ear, while the boy was speaking.

The next minute a lady and gentleman on horseback swept out of a side road, that led from Fredericksburg, as Claude knew, and dashed down the road, some way ahead, toward the ford.

"Dar Marse Clarence," said the boy.

Claude started violently in his saddle. There was no mistaking those two figures. He had seen them before!

Both were splendidly mounted on young bay thorough

breeds, and rode with all the ease and grace of perfect equestrians. But the tall, lithe figure of the man, the air of haughty grace, the closely-buttoned suit of black, with the broad, shadowy gray hat, was unmistakable. The lady, too, small and slight, graceful as an antelope, with coils of black, shining hair around the little round head. Where had he seen her?

Not as she was now, in dark-brown riding-habit, with jaunty jockey cap on head.

No. As he looked there flashed through his mind a vision of hot suns, waving palm trees, beds of tuberose and jessamine, and a figure gorgeous in cloth of gold.

He knew her in a minute. IT WAS MARGUERITE. And the other, her companion, who was it, but the pirate of the Indies, THE RED RAJAH HIMSELF!

Claude Peyton dashed in the spurs with involuntary cruelty, and galloped forward, shouting to the others to stop. The road to the ford in this place was as steep as the side of a house, figuratively speaking, and required great care in riding.

The Red Rajah and his companion were going at full speed down it, and the former turned his head to ascertain the cause of the shouting behind.

The next moment his horse tripped over a rolling stone, and came headlong down on the hard road, throwing its rider over on his head, and rolling over him.

A shriek from Marguerite, as the horse fell, and she tried to pull up.

But the wild thoroughbred, near his stable, could not be halted by those tiny hands. He carried her on, still shrieking, to the mansion below, near the ford, where he stopped, snorting and trembling, before the porch, to the terror and astonishment of the old colonel's sable household.

Claude found himself beside the fallen horseman, all in a whirl of bewilderment. From the sudden recognition to the terrible accident, hardly ten seconds had elapsed.

It came like a flash.

The haughty cavalier of a moment before lay in the midst of the hard rocky road, a stream of blood welling from his head, as it lay on a jagged stone; the lady's horse was tearing down the road below; Claude was pulling up his own animal to run to the assistance of the fallen man; and all of this happened in an instant of time.

Now the fallen horse began to struggle furiously to rise. Full of oats, and untired, he did not lie still and wait to be helped, although he had fallen with his feet up hill. He lashed out with his iron-bound hoofs, striking his stunned rider again and again. Before Claude could rush to his head, he had struck the fallen man four or five times, the hoofs echoing with a horrible, crashing *thud*, every time.

But the prostrate horseman never felt the blows. He was completely insensible.

Claude's horse ran off down the hill, and his master succeeded at last in quieting the frantic struggles of the other. He did not dare to encourage him to rise, till assistance came.

The poor gentleman lay with his body half under the horse, and could not be moved without great danger of his head being struck by the animal's hoofs. So Claude was compelled to hold down the horse's head to the ground, and wait for assistance.

While he did so, he examined the face of the fallen man intently.

It was the Don Gregorio he had known. That was certain. Pale and lifeless as the face was, he could not be mistaken in that. There was the same haughty outline, the same long, curving mustache.

But if it was Don Gregorio, if it was the Red Rajah, another conviction forced itself upon his unwilling mind as he gazed.

This man was his own brother, and no impostor. The longer he looked, the more certain he grew. He wondered how it was that he had never suspected it before. A great tenderness came over him, as he remembered how the Rajah had saved his life, while Claude was doing his utmost against his.

It was no mysterious superstition that had saved him. The brother had recognized the mark his own hand had traced on Claude's breast, and had given him his life. How great the provocation had been to take it, Claude could judge from his own sufferings since he had lost Marguerite.

How long he sat there, gazing at those pale features, with the dark stream of blood slowly welling from the temple, he

did not know. At length—it seemed an age—he heard a confused buzz of voices approaching, with many footsteps.

Then he was surrounded by the wondering negroes, and recognized his father at their head.

Colonel Peyton was so shocked and astonished as to be, incapable of superintending the removal of the body.

"Claude! Clarence! My God! What a welcome to my boy!" was all he could ejaculate.

Claude took command with his characteristic quickness.

"It is I, father," he said; "I saw him fall. Don't talk yet. We must get him out. Here, boys, one of you get on the horse's head. Quick. So. Now four of you take him by the legs. Hold on as tight as you can. He can't kick now. So. Now haul the brute off the body. Two of you take my brother under the arms, and drag him out. Quick. All together. So."

In a moment more the insensible Clarence Peyton was dragged clear of the feet of the animal, and in safety; when the negroes jumped away, and let the horse scramble to his feet.

Now Claude had time to hear and answer his father's anxious inquiries, while the little procession bore the injured man slowly down the hill to the home of his ancestors.

They went softly and mournfully along, till they were down by the ford, where the foaming river dashed violently by, over the rocky shallows. They turned then, under the grove of lofty oaks and cedars, that shaded Peyton Hall, leaving the old mill on the other side of the road. They entered the quiet, shady dell, where the stately hall was hidden from view between its two hills, while a little purling stream ran from the spring-house in front of the door.

Slowly and sadly they bore the body up the steps, on to the broad, shady porch, that covered the front of the house.

Poor Mrs. Peyton, trembling and weeping, met them on the porch, and followed them into the room, where they laid their burden on the bed.

Small time was there for welcome to the returned one. Claude's mother sunk into his arms, weeping and moaning, while there was anxious bustle among the servants, to bring water and lint to dress the wounds. One of the men started for Culpepper at full gallop to fetch the doctor, and in the mean time every one obeyed Claude.

Accustomed to wounds and danger, he examined his brother's injuries, and found them hopeless at the first examination. The skull was not fractured, it appeared, but the hoofs of the frantic horse had beaten in the left side of the rider, breaking several ribs; and a thin stream of blood flowed from his mouth, telling of internal hemorrhage.

Marguerite was nowhere to be seen.

Claude ordered all the negroes from the room and waited his brother's return to consciousness.

"Where is Mademoiselle de Favannes?" he whispered to his mother.

Mrs. Peyton controlled her grief sufficiently to answer.

"She came in nearly distracted, poor thing. Her aunt, Madame de Choiseul, is here, and insisted on her going to her room. Poor child! She would be no use here. Oh! Claude! Claude! They were to be married to-morrow. And now my poor Clarence will die. And I had only just begun to be happy with him, and to love her. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Mother, it is God's will," said Claude, softly. "You have one son left still."

"I know it, my child," she answered, weeping. "But poor Clarence had been away so long. He was like the lost sheep found again. And now I shall lose him forever."

Colonel Peyton sat by the bed, entirely overcome. He was an old man now, and unfit to bear such a shock.

Claude watched the wounded man, saw the eyelids quiver at last.

"Hush! he wakes!"

The three clustered round the bed in great anxiety as Clarence Peyton slowly opened his eyes.

He gazed round the room, dreamily, for a few minutes. Then his eyes fell on Claude. He smiled faintly.

"Claude," he whispered, in a low voice, "you have come at last. You know who I am now."

"Hush!" said Claude, quietly. "You have had an accident. You must not speak till the doctor comes."

Clarence slowly raised his left hand to his brow. He took it away, bloody. His breath appeared to come in labored gasps.

"What's the matter?" he whispered. "Where is Marguerite?"

"You came down with your horse on a stony road, and the beast trampled on you," exclaimed Claude. "I fear you are badly hurt. We have sent for the doctor."

"Throw physic to the dogs," whispered Clarence, with a ghastly smile of pain and attempted sarcasm. "I want no doctor—I know it all now—I remember—the horse came on his head—and I on mine. But I can't—breathe. What's the—matter?"

He spoke in short, abrupt sentences, gasping between them. Colonel Peyton addressed him.

"Don't try to talk, my poor boy. Don't. You'll hurt yourself, and, perhaps, kill yourself."

Clarence smiled again, a smile distorted with pain.

"Better so, perhaps," he said, faintly. "I'm—nothing but—a useless—scamp—Claude's the man—of the family."

There was a dead silence in the room for some minutes, only broken by Mrs. Peyton's sobs.

Presently the wounded man turned to Claude. His mind seemed to be perfectly clear, although to Claude's eyes, it was evident that he was sinking with terrible rapidity.

"Better as it is, Claude," he whispered. "Don't tell my father—I spared your life—spare my honor—when—I'm gone."

He spoke so low and brokenly, that no one but Claude understood him. The latter bowed his head, and answered:

"Fear not. I will keep your secret."

The dying man—for such he was now—smiled in gratitude, and whispered:

"Thanks—where's—Marguerite?"

"Go and fetch her, mother," said Claude, in a low tone, and presently the girl glided into the room, silent and tearless, keeping down her grief by a strong effort.

She started violently when she saw Claude, and for the first time realized who he was.

"Monsieur Claude!" she ejaculated.

"What? have you met before?" asked Mrs. Peyton, surprised even at that moment.

"Yes, mother. I will tell you afterward," said Claude, hurriedly. "Don't talk about it now, please."

Clarence Peyton looked steadily at Claude and Marguerite, as they stood beside his bed.

"Marguerite," he said, in the soft French tongue he always used to her, "thou wilt soon be free, child. Thou hast tried to love me for long, but it has been a hard task. Now thou canst have thy Monsieur Claude, and you can both love each other. It is best so, child. Kiss me good-by. I'm going from thee."

Marguerite threw her arms around him in a burst of tears, and every one in the room was deeply affected. Clarence himself recovered the first, and motioned his mother to take her away.

A terrible spasm of pain contorted his features, in the midst of which a thick stream of blood burst from his lips and dyed the pillow.

Marguerite shrieked and fainted, and was drawn away from the bedside by Claude, and placed in a large chair near by.

Then he returned to wipe away the flowing tide. When it ceased, it became apparent that Clarence Peyton had not long to live. He motioned Claude to his side and whispered a few words in his ear.

"When—I'm—gone—marry—Marguerite," were the words; "good-by—pray for me."

A moment after he shuddered and stretched himself out. A second flow of crimson indicated that another blood vessel was burst, and in a moment more the soul of Clarence Peyton had gone to its long account.

Gifted with strength, beauty, and talent, beyond the average, he had made no use of them but to win himself the chieftainship of a band of barbarian pirates, only to desert them, and flee with his ill-gotten riches to the land that gave him birth. Stricken down at last by the inscrutable Providence of God, just upon the eve of the consummation of his happiness, brilliant, wicked Clarence Peyton, the accomplished Don Gregorio Rodriguez, fell on a plain road in broad daylight, and was trampled to death by his own horse.

Claude shuddered as he reflected on his ending, and reverently closed the eyes of his dead brother.

A year after he and Marguerite were married.

THE END.

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